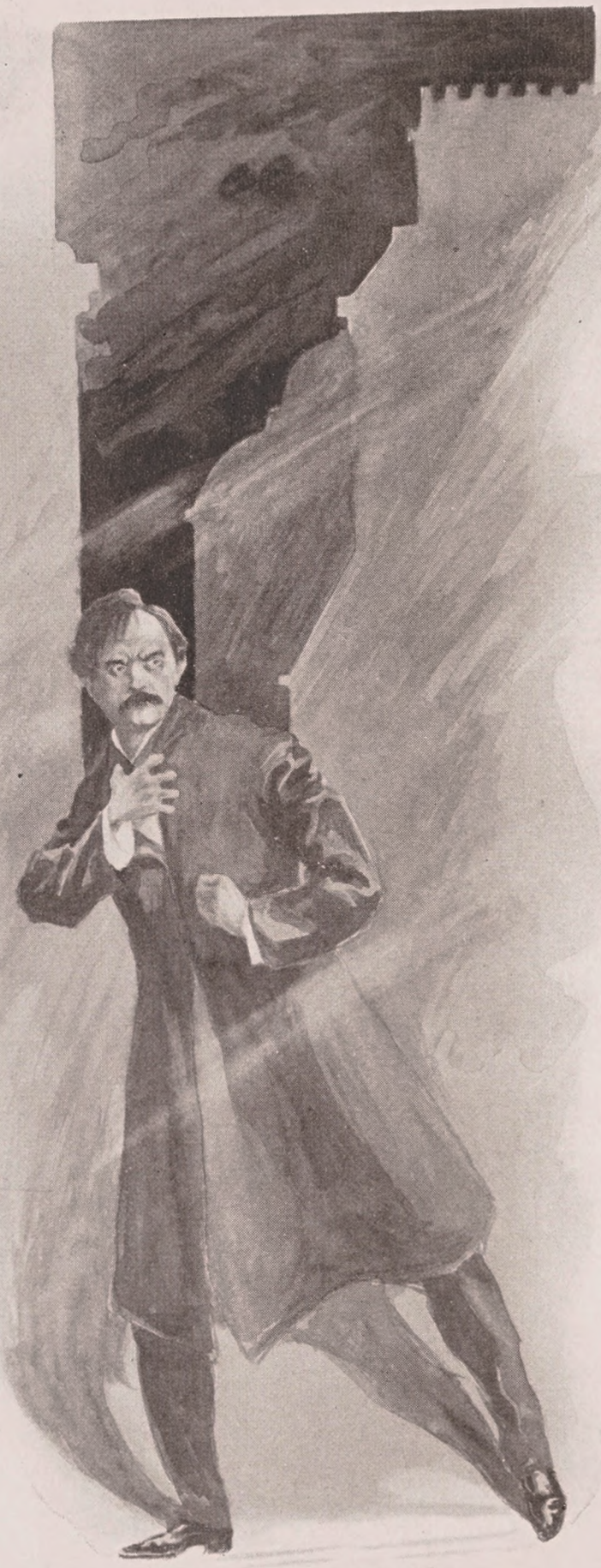

ON I WENT THROUGH MIST OR DARKNESS

Valdemar A. Thisted

"

A MESSAGE FROM A LOST SOUL

OR

LETTERS FROM HELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER ON

HELL

AS GOD HAS REVEALED IT IN HIS WORD

By REV. R. A. TORREY

AND A CONCLUDING CHAPTER ON

HEAVEN

THE HOME OF THE REDEEMED

By REV. WM. H. LINDEMUTH

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HELL

AS GOD HAS REVEALED IT
IN HIS WORD

By REV. R. A. TORREY

The Bible doctrine of hell appalling but true.
No one need go, who does not choose to.
Unpleasant truth better than pleasant error.
Hell is certain. Why it is certain.
Hell a place of extreme bodily suffering.
Hell a place of memory and remorse.
Hell a place of insatiable and tormenting desire.
Hell a place of shame.
Hell a place of vile companionships.
Hell a world without hope.

HELL.

All we know about the future destiny of the wicked is what God has been pleased to reveal to us in His Word. Human speculations upon the subject are absolutely worthless. God knows, we don't. But God has been pleased to tell us much of what He does know on this subject. It is the part of wisdom for us to listen to Him. One ounce of God's revelation about the future is worth one hundred tons of man's speculation. Yet on every side we hear men giving us their speculations about the future life. Men will tell you: "I think so and so about the future life." What difference does it make what you think, the question is, what does God say? Most men in their speculations about the future life consult their wishes rather than their judgment. They do not desire to believe the Bible doctrine; they go to work to fix the future up in the way they would like to have it, but God is not consulting us in the matter. The wise man never asks what he would like to think, he asks what are the facts in the case.

Undoubtedly the Bible doctrine about the future destiny of the wicked is appalling, but the fact that it is appalling does not prove that it is not true. The San Francisco disaster was appalling nevertheless it is a fact. The facts about human sin and human suffering — as any man can see for himself in any great city, if he will only open his eyes — are appalling, nevertheless they are facts. What God has revealed about the future destiny of those who reject Christ in the life that now is is appalling, but none the less it is a fact. The

wise man will not shut his eyes to these facts because they are so appalling, but will open his eyes wide to the facts and act accordingly. But there is one fact that greatly relieves the appalling nature of the Bible revelations about the eternal agony and despair that await those who continue in sin; that fact is that it is possible for any one who will to repent and accept Christ; and, therefore, no one needs to go to hell unless he chooses to. The man who shuts his eyes to the fact of hell because it is so appalling and plunges headlong thither, when he might open his eyes to the fact and turn out of the path that leads to that fearful place, is a consummate fool.

I wish that I could believe that there is no hell; that is, I wish that I could believe that all men would come to repentance and accept Christ and that therefore hell would be unnecessary. Of course, if men will persist in sin and persist in the rejection of Jesus Christ, God's glorious Son, I cannot but recognize that it is right that there should be a hell and that hell should continue as long as men persist in their sin and rejection of Christ. If men will choose sin, and if men will trample under foot the glorious Son of God, it is for the good of the universe and the glory of God that there should be a hell to confine them in. But I wish with all my heart that all men would repent, and thus render hell unnecessary, so far as the human race is concerned. But I do not wish to believe it if it is not true. I would rather believe and proclaim unpleasant truth than to believe and proclaim pleasant error, and as awful as the thought is I have been driven to the conclusion that there is a hell. No man ever tried harder than I to believe that hell was of limited duration. I came again and again to the truth as revealed in the Bible and

backed away from it. I once brought myself to the place where I honestly believed and taught that all men, and even the devil, would ultimately come to repentance, and thus hell would cease to be. But upon more mature thought I came to the place where I could not honestly reconcile this position with the teaching of Christ and the apostles. I was driven to this alternative — that I must either give up my Bible, or give up my "eternal hope." I could not give up the Bible. I had found overwhelming proof that the Bible was the very Word of God, and I could make the Bible agree with my theory of "eternal hope" only by twisting and distorting the Scriptures to force them to teach what they did not really teach. As an honest man I could not twist and distort the Scriptures in order to make them agree with what I wanted to believe. So as an honest man there was only one thing left for me to do, that was to give up my opinion that all men would ultimately come to repentance and be saved.

I know perfectly well that if a man stands squarely upon the position of Christ and the apostles and stands upon it without fear, he will be called narrow, harsh and cruel. But he is a coward who withholds truth to avoid being called hard names. As to being narrow, I have no desire to be any more broad than Jesus Christ was; as to being cruel, is it cruel to tell men the truth? Is it not the kindest thing that any man can do, to declare the whole counsel of God and point out to men the full measure of their danger. Suppose that I were walking down a railway track, knowing that far back of me there was a train coming on loaded with happy excursionists, men, women and children full of joy and glee. I come to a place where I had supposed there was a bridge across the chasm, but to my horror I find

the bridge is down. I say to myself, "I must go back at once as far as possible up the track and stop that oncoming train." I hurry back and put forth my utmost effort to stop the train. I break in upon these merry people with the awful announcement that the bridge is down and that they are in peril of frightful disaster. I spoil the merriment of the evening, and I banish bright thoughts from their mind, and bring in their place horrid thoughts if imminent danger. Possibly some one goes crazy over the declaration of the fact. Would that be cruel? Would it not be the kindest thing that I could do? Suppose on the other hand when I had found the bridge down, I should say, "These people are so happy, I cannot bear to disturb their night's lightheartedness and gaiety. That would be too cruel. I will sit down here and wait till the train comes. I cannot bear to spoil their merriment, and perhaps if I should tell the facts some one might go crazy," so I sit down while the train comes rushing on and leaps unwarned into that awful abyss and soon there are rising the despairing shrieks and groans of the wounded and mangled as they crawl out from among the corpses of the dead. Would that be kind? Would it not be the cruelest thing that I could do? Well, I have been down the track. I had supposed that there was a bridge across the chasm but I have found that the bridge is down. I have discovered that many of you who are now full of gaiety and joy are rushing on unwarned toward the awful fate that awaits you. I have come back up the track to warn you. I may banish for the time being your joyfulness and merriment, possibly some one may become crazy through brooding over the awful facts, but by God's grace, I will save you from the awful impending doom. Is that cruel? It is not

the kindest thing that I can do? I would much rather be called cruel for being kind, than be called kind for being cruel. The cruelest man on earth is the man who believes the stern things we are told in the Word of God about the future penalties of sin, but keeps back from declaring them because they are unpopular. The kindest Man that ever walked this earth, the Man who showed His kindness by dying for the most worthless of men and dying for His bitterest enemies was Jesus Christ, and yet no one ever uttered stronger or sterner words about the future destiny of those who continue in sin and reject Him than Jesus Himself uttered. I would rather be like Him than like these men to-day who make a great boast of their being too kind-hearted to believe in hell but who only show their kind-heartedness by smooth words through which they gain the applause and money of their fellow men while they rock them to sleep unwarned of their awful peril.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF HELL.

It is an absolute certainty that there is a hell.

There are many that tell us that all the scholarly ministers have given up belief in an orthodox hell. This statement is a lie. That kind of argument is a favorite argument with men who know they have a weak case and try to bolster up a weak case by strong assertion. In a similar way many of the destructive critics of the Bible are asserting that all scholars now hold their view. If they are at all posted regarding what they are talking about they know they lie when they say it, but it is the kind of argument that has great weight with people who not having much scholarship themselves, long to be in the same class with those who they

suppose are the great scholars of the day. It is true beyond a doubt that some scholarly ministers have given up belief in the orthodox hell, but they never gave it up for reasons of Greek scholarship, or New Testament scholarship. They gave it up for purely sentimental and speculative reasons, and then attempted to make their Greek Testament conform to their speculative theories. No man can go to the New Testament to find out what it really teaches, and not to see how he can twist it into conformity with the speculations which he wishes to believe, and not find hell in the New Testament.

But suppose it were true, that all the scholarly ministers had given up belief in the orthodox hell, it would not prove anything; for everybody that is familiar with the history of the world and the history of the church knows that time and time again the scholars have all given up belief in doctrines that after all in the final outcome proved to be true. There were no scholars in Noah's day, except Noah himself, that believed there would be a flood, but the flood came just the same. There were no scholars in Lot's day except Lot that believed that God would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but He did. Jeremiah and one friend were the only leading men in Jerusalem that believed what Jeremiah taught about the coming destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, but history outside the Bible as well as history inside the Bible, tell us that it came true to the very letter, though there was not a scholar who believed it. Every leading school of theological thought in the days of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, and the Essenes, every one of the four, scoffed at Jesus Christ's prediction about the coming judgment of God upon Jerusalem, but secular

history tells us that in spite of the dissent of all the scholars it came true just as Jesus Christ predicted. There was not a university in the world, there was scarcely a leading scholar, in the days of Huss and Martin Luther that had not given up faith in the doctrine of justification by faith, till Huss and Luther and their colleagues came. It was necessary to establish a new university to stand for the truth of God. But to-day we know that Martin Luther was right, that every university of Germany, France, England, and Scotland was wrong. Just so to-day, if it were true that every scholarly preacher on earth and every university on earth had given up belief in the orthodox hell, it would not prove anything whatever.

Hell is certain. Why is it certain? First of all, because Jesus Christ says so, the apostles say so, God says so. You can find the words of Jesus Christ in Matt. 25:41, "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." If you want the words of the Apostle Paul, you can find them in II Thess. 1:7-9, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." You can find the words of the Apostle John in Rev. 20:15, "And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." You can find the words of Apostle Peter in II Pet. 2:4, 9, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; . . . the

Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The words of the Apostle Jude may be found in Jude 14, 15, "The Lord shall come with ten thousand of His holy ones, rendering vengeance unto all, and convincing all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly done, and of all their hard sayings which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." You can find the words of Jesus Himself again, after He had died, after He had gone down into the abode of the dead, after He had come up again from the abode of the dead, after He had ascended to the right hand of the Father (He certainly knows what He is talking about now — He has been there) in Revelation 21:8, "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

The fact that Jesus Christ and the apostles say that there is a hell, the fact that God says it through them, makes it absolutely certain that there is a hell. The only thing against it is the speculations of the theologians and the dreams of the poets. The words of Jesus Christ have stood the test of eighteen centuries and have always proved true in the final outcome. No school of theological speculation has ever stood the test of eighteen years, and when I have Christ on one side and speculative theologians on the other, it don't take me long to decide which to believe.

But hell is certain for another reason, namely experience, observation and common sense prove unmistakably that there must be a hell. One of the most certain facts of every man's experience is this, that where-

ever there is sin there must be suffering. Each one of us knows that. The second certain fact of observation is that the longer a man continues in sin the deeper he sinks down into sin and the ruin, shame, agony and despair which are the outcome of all sin. There are hundreds and thousands of men and women in every city tonight in a very practical hell, and that hell is getting worse every day. You may find it difficult to reconcile what these men and women suffer with the doctrine that "God is love" but you do not, if you are an intelligent man, give up the facts that you see because you cannot reconcile them with your philosophy. An intelligent man accepts facts whether they fit into his philosophy or not, and it is a fact that thousands and tens of thousands of men and women are in a very practical hell to-day and that hell is becoming worse and worse every day. If this process keeps going on and they keep sinking deeper and deeper into ruin, shame and despair, when the time of possible repentance has passed, and it must be passed some time, what is left but an everlasting hell? Again I say, the only thing against it is the dream of poets and the speculations of would-be philosophers, but the speculations of philosophers have proved an ignis fatuus from the very dawn of history. When I have on the one hand the teaching of observation, experience and common sense and on the other hand only the speculations of philosophers and the dreams of poets, it does not take me very long to decide which to believe. But when in addition to the teachings of observation, experience and common sense in their conflict with the speculations of cloistered theologians, we have the sure teaching of the Word of God, the case is settled. There is a hell. One who shuts his eyes to the fact is playing the fool.

II. THE CHARACTER OF HELL.

Hell is a place of extreme bodily suffering.

That is plain from the teaching of the New Testament. There are many proofs of it but the following will suffice. The commonest words to express the doom of the impenitent are "death" and "destruction," constantly recurring. What do death and destruction mean? God has not left us in doubt for He has taken pains to define His terms. You will find His definition of destruction in Rev. 17:8 compared with Rev. 19:20 and Rev. 20:10. In Rev. 17:8 we are told that "the beast goeth into perdition." The word there translated "perdition" is the same word which is translated elsewhere "destruction," and ought to be so translated here, or else it ought to be translated differently in the other passages. Now, if you can find where the beast goes, you have God's own definition of "perdition," or "destruction." Rev. 19:20 tells us just where the beast goes. You will there read that the "beast and false prophet were cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Next turn to Rev. 20:10 and there you are told that a thousand years after the beast and false prophet have been cast in there, the devil also is cast into the place where the beast and false prophet still "*are*" at the end of the thousand years, and they shall be "tormented day and night forever and ever." By God's own definition then "perdition" or "destruction" is the condition of beings in a place of conscious and unending torment. Now let us look at God's definition of "death." You will find it in Rev. 21:8, "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone: *which is the second death.*" God's definition of death is a portion in "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," just the same as His definition of "perdition." "But," some one will say, "that is highly figurative." Very well, take it as that if you like, but remember God's figures stand for facts. Some people when they come to something unwelcome in the Bible will say, "It is figurative," and fancy they have thus done away with it altogether. You have not done away with it at all by calling it figurative. You have simply laid upon yourself the obligation to explain the figure. What does the figure mean? God is no liar and God's figures never overstate the facts, and it means at least this much, bodily suffering of the intensest kind.

We must remember furthermore that in the next life we do not exist as disembodied spirits. The theory so prevalent in our day of the immortality of the soul independent of the body, where we float around as disembodied spirits, is speculative philosophy and not New Testament teaching. According to the Bible, in the world to come, the redeemed spirit has a body, not this same body, but a body the perfect counterpart of the redeemed spirit that inhabits it, and partaker with it in all its blessedness. On the other hand the lost spirit has a body, not this same body, a radically different body, but a body the perfect counterpart of the lost spirit that inhabits it, and partaker with it in all its misery. Even in this present life, inward spiritual sin causes outward bodily pain. Millions of men to-night are suffering the most exquisite bodily suffering because of inward sin. It will be so in the world to come.

2. But while bodily pain is one of the features of hell it is the least significant feature. *Hell is a place*

of memory and remorse. In the picture which Christ has given us of the rich man after death, Abraham said to the rich man "Remember." The rich man had not taken much with him that he had on earth into the future world, but he had taken one thing, he had taken his memory. Every one that reads these lines and continues in sin and therefore spends eternity in hell will not take much with him that he possesses to-day but he will take one thing, he will take his memory. Men will remember the women whose lives they have blasted and ruined. Women will remember the lives they have squandered in fashion and frivolity and foolishness when they might have been living for God and their fellow men. All will remember the Christ they have rejected and the opportunities for salvation that they have despised. There is no torment known to man like the torment of an accusing memory. I have seen strong men weep like children. What was the matter? Memory. I have seen one of the strongest, brainiest men I ever knew throw himself on the floor of my office and roll and sob and groan and wail, what was the matter? Memory. I have had men and women hurry up to me at the close of a service with pale cheeks, with drawn lips, with haunted eyes, and beg a private interview. What was the matter? Memory. You will take your memory with you into the life beyond the grave and a memory and a conscience that are not set at peace in the life that now is by the atoning blood of Christ and the pardoning grace of God never will be. Hell is a place where men remember and suffer.

3. *Hell is a place of insatiable and tormenting desire.* Jesus tells us that the rich man in hell said, "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water

and cool my tongue for I am tormented (R. V. in anguish) in this flame." Of what is this the picture? That hell is a place where desire and passion exist in their highest potency and where there is nothing to gratify them. There is another thing beside our memory that we carry into the next world with us, we carry into that world the desires that we build up here. What are men and women who are living in sin and living in worldliness doing? They are developing in their souls desires until they become regnant for which there is no gratification in that world to which they are going. Happy is the man or woman who in this life set their affections on the things above, things that will exist in the life to which they are going, rather than cultivating desires and aspirations for which there is no satisfaction in the world to which they are hastening. But wretched indeed is that man or woman who cultivates into ruling power passions and desires for which there is no gratification in that world which they will so soon enter.

4. *Hell is a place of shame.*

How awful and heartbreaking is the agony of shame. It drives thousands of people to suicide. Hell is a place where everybody is dishonored and where there is no relief in suicide. There is no place there to hide even for a moment from the shame that overwhelms its inhabitants. There is no relief for a moment day or night. It is always the same, one constant consciousness of dishonor and disgrace.

5. *Hell is a place of vile companionships.*

We have a picture of the society of hell in Rev. 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake

which burneth with fire and brimstone." That is the society of hell. But some one will say, "There are many brilliant and gifted persons who are going there." True, but stop a moment and think, how long will it take the most gifted man or woman to sink in such a world as that. In any great city I can take you to the lowest dives and pick you out men who were once physicians, lawyers, congressmen, college professors, leading business men and even ministers of the Gospel, who are now living with thugs, moral lepers, outlaws, criminals and everything that is vile and bad. How did they get there? They began to sink. It does not take one long to go down when they begin to sink. It does not take a man of the most brilliant intellect long to sink to the level of the lowest when he begins to sink. I recall a man who in my early days was one of the most brilliant orators I ever listened to, whom I afterwards saw a mental and moral wreck lying out upon our lawn in filth, sleeping off a drunk and he afterwards died in a madhouse through drink and tobacco. I recall a woman who was once regarded as one of the most brilliant society women and conversationalists in Chicago, one of the elect women's committee, who during the World's Fair received the members of the nobility of the old world and the royalty of Spain. A few years afterward she was found in Chicago by some friends of mine who were going through the slums hunting for poor forlorn ones that they might help. They found her a poor creature with nails grown like bird's claws, long tangled matted hair covered with filth, and face that had not been washed for weeks and clad in a single filthy garment, an utter wreck. How did it happen? She had gone down through cocaine. In a world like hell it will not take

the most brilliant man or woman who enters very long to sink beneath the level of the vilest moral leper who now slinks by night through the purlieus of our great cities.

6. *Hell is a world without hope.*

God in His Word does not hold out one ray of hope to any man who dies impenitent. It is argued that the word aionios translated "everlasting" never means everlasting. But any one who says so either has not looked into the matter, which is most likely, or else he tells a deliberate falsehood. It is true that the word does not necessarily and always mean everlasting. Instances can be cited where it does not so mean. Whether it does or not in any given instance is to be determined by the context. In Matt. 25:46 we read, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal." The same Greek word is translated "everlasting" in the first part of the sentence and "eternal" in the last part of the sentence. If it means everlasting in one part of the verse (and every one holds that it does when applied to life) by every known law of exegesis it means the same in the other half of the verse. Our Lord was an honest man and He did not juggle with words and He would not use the same word to mean one thing in one half of the verse and something else in the other half of the verse. Furthermore, there is another expression "Eis tous aionas ton aionon" or "Eis tous aionas aionon" ("Unto the ages of the ages"). This expression is used twelve times in one book, eight times of the existence of God and the duration of His reign, once of the duration of the blessedness of the righteous, and in every remaining instance of the punishment of the beast, the false prophet, and the impenitent. It represents

not years tumbling upon years, nor centuries tumbling upon centuries, but ages tumbling upon ages in endless procession. It is the strongest known expression for absolute endlessness.

I do not wonder that men try to find some hope regarding the ultimate condition of the lost. I too have tried to find it. It is an appalling thought to think that in that world of darkness there is absolutely not one ray of hope. But appalling as it is, if it is true let us face it. I have hunted my Bible through for one ray of hope for men that die impenitent, just one ray that could be called such when the passage was properly interpreted by the right laws of exegesis. After years of search I have failed to find one such passage. I am familiar with the passages men quote. I have studied them with the utmost care. I tried to put upon them the construction that men who write of "eternal hope" put upon them, but I am satisfied they will not bear the burden placed upon them when carefully interpreted in their context with an honest attempt to discover what they really mean, and not to make them fit a theory. The New Testament does not hold out one single ray of hope for men and women who die without Christ. Any one who dares to do so dares to do what God has not done. He takes a fearful responsibility upon himself. "Forever and ever" is the never ceasing wail of that restless sea of fire. As appalling as it is, let us face the facts and act accordingly. The conception is an awful and appalling one. It is, however, the Scriptural conception and also the reasonable one when we come to see the appalling nature of sin, and especially the appalling sin of trampling under foot God's mercy toward sinners and rejecting

God's glorious Son whom His love has provided as a Saviour.

Shallow views of sin and shallow views of God's holiness and shallow views of the glory of Jesus Christ and His claims upon us, lie at the bottom of weak theories of the doom of the impenitent. When we see sin in all its wretchedness and enormity, the holiness of God in all its perfection, and the glory of Jesus Christ in all its infinity, nothing but a doctrine that those who persist in the choice of sin, who love darkness rather than light, and who persist in the rejection of the Son of God shall endure everlasting anguish will satisfy the demands of our own moral intuitions. Nothing but the fact that we dread suffering more than we love God and more than we love the glory of Jesus Christ, makes us repudiate the thought that beings who eternally choose sin shall eternally suffer, or that men who despise God's mercy and spurn His Son shall be given over to endless anguish. Men who accept a loose doctrine regarding the ultimate penalty of sin lose their power for God. I have known of man after man who was once a power for God who has been led to accept the doctrine of "Restoration," or "Universalism," or "Annihilationism" and every such man that I have known has lost his power for God.

A MESSAGE

FROM

A LOST SOUL

OR

LETTERS FROM HELL

The reader will be impressed with the strong imaginative energy, and powerful statements of truth in these letters: Truth as to our relations to God, and man, and duty, and conscience; the awful verity, that men make their fate in unmaking themselves; that in defacing the image of God in them, they construct for themselves a world of horror and dismay; that their own deeds and character are the creating cause of the *outer darkness.* It will be observed that the faint ray of possible hope, now and then expressed, always vanishes in the blackness of despair. The title to these letters is fearful, but the letters are *more* fearful. In horror they are supreme and unparalleled. If they rouse any soul to seek to know God, through Jesus Christ, and obtain eternal life, and thereby avoid the horrors of the lost, they will have served their purpose.

LETTER I.

I FELT the approach of death. There had been a time of unconsciousness following upon the shiverings and wild fancies of fever. Once more I seemed to be waking; but what a waking! The power of life was gone: I lay weak and helpless, unable to move hand or foot; the eyelids which I had raised, closed again paralyzed; the tongue had grown too large for the parched mouth; the voice — my own voice — sounded strange in my ears. I heard those say that watched me — they thought I understood not — "He is past suffering." Was I? Ah me! I suffered more than human soul can imagine. I had a terrible conviction that I lay dying, death creeping nearer. I had always shrunk from the bare thought of it, but I never knew what it meant to be dying, never before that hour. Hour? — nay, the hours drifted into days and the days seemed one awful hour of horror and agony at the boundary line of life.

Where was faith? I had believed once, but that was long ago. Vainly I tried to call back some shred of belief; the poorest remnant of faith would have seemed a wealth of comfort in the deep anguish of soul that compassed me about. There was nothing I could cling to — nothing to uphold me. Like a drowning man I would have snatched at a straw even; but there was nothing — nothing! That is a terrible word; one word only in all human utterance being more terrible still — too late! too late! Vainly I struggled; an agonizing fear consumed what was left of me.

And that which I would not call back stood up before my failing perception with an unsought clearness and completeness of vision — the life which lay behind me, and now was ebbing away. But little good had I done in that life, and much evil. I saw it: it stood out as a fearful fact from the background of consciousness. I had lived a life of selfishness, ever pleasing my own desire. It was true, awfully true, that I had not followed the way of life, but the paths of death since the days even of childhood. And now I lay dying, a victim of my own folly, wretched, helplessly lost! One after another my sins rose before me, crying for expiation; but it was too late now — too late for repentance. Despair only was left; the very thought of repentance had faded from the brain.

Not yet fifty years old, possessed of everything that could make life pleasant, and yet to die — it seemed impossible, though I felt that death even then had entered my being. There was death within me, and death without; it spoke from the half-light of the sick chamber; it spoke from every feature of the watchers about me; it spoke from the churchyard silence that curtained my couch. It was a fearful hour, and I, the chief person, the center of all that horror — every eye upon me, every ear listening for my parting breath. A shudder went through me: I felt as one already buried — buried alive!

One thought of comfort seemed left — I snatched at it: it won't go worse with you than with most people! Is there anything that could have shown the depth of my wretchedness more clearly than the fact that I *could* comfort myself with such miserable assurance? Was it not the very cause of all my misery that I had come by the broad way chosen by the many?

But what avails it now to depict the horrors of my last struggle, since no living soul could comprehend my sufferings, or understand what I felt, on entering the gates of death. Hell was within me. No, no; it was as yet but approaching.

The end drew nigh. Once more I raised my eyes, and beheld the terror distorting my own features reflected from the faces that watched me. A deep-drawn sigh, a gurgling moan, a last convulsive wrench — and I was gone. . . .

An unknown sensation laid hold of me. What was this I felt? Death had clutched my every fibre, but I seemed released, free, strangely free! Consciousness had been fading, but was returning even now, waking as from a swoon. Where was I? Mist and night, desolation and emptiness, enveloped me; but the dismal space could not be called dark, for I could see, although there was not a ray of light to aid me. The first feeling creeping through me was a sensation of cold, of inward cold, rising from the very roots of being; chill after chill went through me; I shuddered with chattering teeth. And an indescribable loathing seized me, born of the nauseous vapors that wrapt me about. Where was I? My mind reverted to the story of the rich man who, having died, lifted up his eyes in hell. Was I the rich man? But that could not be; for of him the story tells that he longed for a single drop of water to cool his tongue, and it says he was tormented in flame. Now I was shivering — shivering with a fearful cold. Yet it is true, nevertheless — terribly true — about the tormenting fire, as I found out ere long.

But consciousness, at first, seemed returned chiefly to experience an indescribable feeling of nakedness, which, indeed, might explain the terrible cold assailing me. I

still believed in my personal identity, but I was merely a shadow of myself. The eye which saw, the teeth which chattered, did not exist any more than the rest of my earthly body existed. All that was left of me was a shade unclothed to the skin — nay, to the inmost soul. No wonder I shivered; no wonder I felt naked. But the feeling of nakedness, strong as it was, excluded shame.

It did not exclude a sense of utter wretchedness. All the manliness, my pride of former days, had left me. Men despise abject cowards I know, but I had sunk below the contempt even of such a name. Wretched, unutterably wretched, I was making my entry into hell at the very time when my obsequies, no doubt, were about to be celebrated on earth with all the pomp befitting the figure I had played. What booted it that some priest with solemn chant should count me blessed, assuring the mourners that I had gained the realms of glory where tears are wiped away and sorrow is no more? what booted it, alas! since I, miserable I, was even then awaking to the pangs of hell? Woe is me — ah, woe indeed!

I hastened onward. Was that earth, or what, that touched my feet? It was soft, spongy — a queer pavement! Possibly it consisted of those good intentions with which, as some one has pointed out, the road to hell is paved. Walking felt strangely unpleasant, but I got along, walking or flitting, I know not which, nor yet how fast; on I went through mist or darkness, or whatever it was. In the far distance, it might be some thousands of miles away, I perceived a glimmering light, and instinctively towards that light I directed my course. The mist seemed to grow less dense, forms took shape about me, but they might be merely the

work of imagination; shadowy outlines of castles, palaces, and houses appearing through the mist. Sometimes it was as if my blind haste carried me right through one of these ghostly structures. After a while I began to distinguish human phantoms flitting along, singly at first, but soon in greater number. I viewed them with horror, fully aware at the same time that they were merely beings like myself. Suddenly a troop of these spirits surrounded me. I burst from them, tremblingly, but only to be seized upon by another troop. I say seized upon, for they snatched at me eagerly, as if each one meant to hold me fast, shade though I was. Vainly they tried to detain me, raising their cries incessantly. But what cries! Their voices fell on my ear as a miserable wheezing, a dismal moaning. In my horror I gave a scream, and lo! it was the same puny frightful sound. There was such a whirr of voices, I could not possibly make them out; not, at least, beyond certain constantly repeated questions, like, "Whence do you come?" or, "What is the news?" Poor me, what cared I for the news left behind? And it was not so much the question, *whence?* but rather its awful opposite, *whither bound?* that filled my soul.

Luckily there were other miserable wanderers speeding along the same road, and while the swarming troops tried to stop them I managed to escape. On I went, panting, not for bodily, but spiritual, distress, till at last I reached a lonely spot where I might try to collect myself.

Collect myself! What was there left to collect — what availed it to consider, since I was lost, hopelessly lost?

Overpowered with that thought I sank to the ground. This, then, was what I had come to. I had died and

found myself in hell, in the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of torment, alas, beyond conception. This, then, was the end of life's enjoyment. Why, ah why, had I been satisfied to halt between faith and unbelief, between heaven and hell, to the last moment? A few short months ago, or, who knows, perhaps, even a few days before the terrible end, it might have been time still to escape so dire a fate. But blindly I had walked to destruction; blindly? — nay, open-eyed, and I deserved no better.

This latter thought was not without a touch of bitter satisfaction. After all, even hell had something left that resembled satisfaction! But, in truth, I hated myself with a burning implacable hatred in spite of the self-love which had accompanied me hither unimpaired. And remembering the many so-called good intentions of my sinful life, I felt ready to tear myself to pieces. In sooth, I myself had assisted diligently in paving the road to hell!

But that feeling was void of contrition. I felt sad; I felt ruined and miserably undone. I condemned, I cursed myself; but repentance was far from me. Oh, could I but repent! I know there is such a thing, but the power of repenting is gone, gone for ever. I did not at first see myself and my position as I do now. I only felt miserable and hopelessly lost. And though I hated myself, at the same time I pitied myself most deeply. Would that I could have wept! Poor Dives sighed for a drop of water; I kept sighing for a tear, a poor human tear, for somehow I felt that tears could unbind me from all my grief. I consumed my powers in vain efforts to weep, but even tears were of the good things beyond me now. The effort shook my soul, but it was vain, vain!

I started suddenly; there was a voice beside me, a young woman with a babe on her arm.

"It is hopeless trying," she said, almost tenderly, her features even more than her voice bespeaking sympathy. "I myself have tried it, and tried again; but it's no use. There is no water here, not as much even as a single tear."

Alas, I felt she spoke the truth. The time was when I might have wept, but I would not; now I longed to weep, but could not.

The young woman — she was hardly more than a girl — sat down beside me. Indescribably touching was the expression of sorrowing fondness with which she gazed upon the babe in her lap, a tiny thing which apparently had not lived many days.

After a pause she turned again to me. It was not I, but the child which occupied her attention.

"Don't you think my baby is alive?" she said. "It is not dead, tell me, though it lies so still and never gives a cry."

To tell the truth I thought the child was dead, but I had it not in me to grieve the poor creature, so I said —

"It may be asleep — babies do sleep a good deal."

"Yes, yes, it is asleep," she repeated, rocking the child softly.

But I sat trembling at the sound of my own voice, which for the first time had shaped itself to words.

"They say I killed my child, my own little baby," she continued. "But don't you think they talk foolishly? How should a mother find it in her heart to kill her child, her very own child?" and she pressed the little thing to her bosom with convulsive tenderness.

The sight was more than I could endure. I rose and

left her. Yet it soothed my own misery that for a moment I seemed filled with another's grief rather than with my own. *Her* grief I could leave behind. I rose and fled but my own wretchedness followed on my heels.

Away I went, steering towards the distant light. It was as though a magic power drove me in that direction. To the right and left of me the realms of mist appeared cultivated and inhabited. Strange, fantastic shapes and figures met my view, but they seemed shadows only of things and men. Much that I saw filled me with terror, while everything added to my pain. By degrees, however, I began to understand that wretched negativeness of existence. I gathered experience as I went on, but what experience? Let me bury it in silence. One incident I will record, since it explains how I first came to comprehend that horror-teeming state of things.

I was stopping in front of one of those transparently shadowy structures; it appeared to be a tavern. In the world I used to despise such localities, and would never have demeaned myself by entering one. But now it was all the same to me. They were making merry within, I saw,— drinking, gambling, and what not. But it was an awful merriment in which these horrible shades were engaged. One of them, to all appearance the landlord, beckoned me to enter; an inviting fire was blazing on the hearth, and, shivering as I was, I went towards it straightway.

"Can't you come in by the door?" snarled the landlord, stopping me rudely.

Abashed I stammered, "I am so cold, so miserably cold!"

"The more fool you for going naked!" cried the fel-

low, with an ugly grin. "We admit well-dressed people as a rule."

Involuntarily I thought of my soft Turkish dressing-gown and its warm belongings, when, lo! scarcely had the idea been shaped in my brain than I found myself clothed in dressing-gown, smoking-cap, and slippers. At the same time my nakedness was not covered, and I felt as cold as before.

I moved towards the hearth, putting my trembling hands to the grate; but the blaze emitted no warmth — it might as well have been painted on canvas.

I turned away in despair. The merry-making shades laughed harshly, calling me a fool for my pains. One of them handed me a goblet. Now I had never been a drunkard, but that feeling of indescribable emptiness within me prompted me to seize the cup, lifting it to my lips eagerly that I might drain it on the spot. But alas the nothingness! my burning desire found it an empty cup, and I felt ready to faint.

My horror must have expressed itself in my features, for they laughed louder than ever, grinning at my disappointment. I bore it quietly. There was something frightfully repulsive in their unnatural merriment, cutting me to the soul.

The carousal continued; I, with wildly-confused ideas, watching the strange revelry.

Recovering myself, I turned to the churlish landlord:

"What house is this?" I asked, with a voice as unpleasant and gnarling as his own.

"It's *my* house!"

That was not much of information, so I asked again after a while: "How did it come to be here — the house I mean — and everything?"

The landlord looked at me with a sneer that plainly

said, "You greenhorn, you!" vouchsafing however presently: "How it came here? — why, I thought of it, and then it was."

That was light on the subject. "Then the house is merely an idea?" I went on.

"Yes, of course; what else should it be?"

"Ah, indeed, youngster," cried one of the gamblers, turning upon me, "here we are in the true land of magic, the like of which was never heard of on earth. We need but imagine a thing, and then we have it. Hurrah, I say, 'tis a merry place!" and with frightful laughter that betokened anything but satisfaction, he threw the dice upon the table.

Now I understood. The house was imaginary, the fire without warmth, the tapers without light, the cards, the dice, the drink, the torn apron even of the landlord — everything, in short, existed merely in imagination. One thing only was no empty idea, but fearful reality — the terrible necessity which forced these shadowy semblances of men to appear to be doing now in the spirit the very things they did in the body upon earth. For this reason the landlord was obliged to keep a low tavern; for this reason the company that gathered there must gamble, drink, and swear, pretending wanton merriment, despair gnawing their hearts the while.

I looked at myself. This clothing then which could not cover me, far less warm my frozen limbs, was but the jugglery of desiring thought. "Lie! falsehood! away!" I cried. Oh that I could get away from myself! Alas! wretch that I was, I could at best escape but the clothing which was no clothing. I tore it from me, rushing away in headlong flight, conscious only of my own miserable nakedness, fiendish peals of laughter following me like the croaking of multitudinous frogs.

How long I wandered, restless spirit that I was, I cannot tell. If there were such a thing as division of time in hell, doubtless it would be imaginary like everything else. The distant light was still my goal. But so far from reaching it, I seemed to perceive that it grew weaker and weaker. This, at first, I took to be some delusion on my part, but the certainty presently was beyond a doubt. The light did decrease till at last it was the mere ghost of a radiance; it was plain I should find myself in utter darkness before long.

It was a fact, then, scarcely to be believed, but a fact nevertheless, that, miserable as I was, I could be more miserable still. I shrunk together within myself, anxious, as far as lay with me, to escape the doings of the dead. People on earth may think that even in Hades it must be a blessing rather than a bane to occupy one's thoughts with the affairs of others. Oh, happy mortals, happy with all your griefs and woes, you judge according to your earthly capacities. There is no such blessing here, no occupying one's thoughts against their own dire drift! And as for diversion, that miserable anodyne for earthborn trouble, it is a thing of the past once you have closed your eyes in death.

It is impossible for me to tell you, since you could not comprehend, to what extent a man here may shrink together within himself. Be it enough to say I cowered as a toad in a hole, hugging my miserable being, till I was roused by a groan coming from somewhere beside me. I started affrighted and looked about. The darkness being still increasing, I, with difficulty, distinguished another cowering figure looking at me furtively. The face was strangely distorted, and the creature had a rope round its neck, the hands being constantly trying to secure the ends; at times also a fin-

ger would move round the neck as if to loosen the rope. The figure looked at me with eyes of terror starting from the head, but not a word would cross the lips. It was plain I must make the beginning.

"The light is decreasing," I said, pointing in the direction whence the pale glimmer emanated. "I fear we shall be in the dark presently."

"Yes," said the figure, with a gurgling voice; "it will be night directly."

"How long will it last?"

"How should I know? It may be some hours, it may be a hundred years."

"Is there such difference of duration?"

"We don't perceive the difference; it is always long, frightfully long," said the figure, with a dismal moan.

"But it is quite certain, is it not, that daylight will reappear?"

"If you call that daylight which we used to call dusk upon earth, we never get more. I strongly suspect that it is not daylight at all; however, that matters little. I see you are a newcomer here."

I could but answer with a sigh, "Yes, quite new; I died but lately."

"A natural death?" queried the spectre.

"To be sure; what else?"

That "what else" evidently displeased the creature; the distorted face looked at me with a horrible grimace, and there was silence.

I, for my part, cared little to continue so unpleasant a conversation, but the spectre resumed ere long:

"It *is* hard to be doomed to carry one's life in one's hands. There is no rest for me anywhere; I am for ever trying to escape; there is not a creature but wants to hang me. Indeed, you are capable of doing it your-

self, I see it in your eyes; only being fresh here you are too bewildered as yet with your own fate to be really dangerous. Do you see the ends of that rope? It is my one aim to prevent people getting hold of them, for if once they succeed I shall be hanged in a jiffy."

The spectre paused, going on presently:

"It is but foolishness and imagination I know; for since no one can take what I have not got, how should any one take my life? But I am utterly helpless, and whenever this foolish fear posssesses me afresh, I must run — run as though I had a thousand lives to lose — as though hell were peopled with murderous hangmen."

The spectre moaned, again trying to loosen the rope with a finger, and the moaning died away into silence.

We sat, but not for long. I made some movement with the arm nearest my wretched neighbor. Evidently he imagined I was for seizing the rope, the ends of which he was tightly grasping, and, like a flash of lightning, he vanished from my side.

LETTER II.

I STAYED where I was, and soon found myself buried in darkness. Did I say *soon?* Fool that I am! How can I tell what length of time passed before it became absolutely dark? One thing only I know, that darkness grew with increasing rapidity and density till it was complete at last. *At last?* — when but a moment since I called it *soon?* How unfit I am to judge at all!

How shall I describe the darkness? Mortal man are apt to say it is to be felt, or to be cut with a knife. could never conceive it. Of very great darkness people But even such manner of speech will not define the night of hell. Darkness here is so dense, so heavy, it oppresses poor souls as with the weight of centuries; it is as though one were wedged in between mountains, unable to move, unable to breathe. It is night beyond all earthly conception; perhaps that is why the Bible calls it the outer darkness, which, I take it, means uttermost.

Thus I was sitting in the narrowest prison, shivering with cold, trembling with terror, miserable, wretched beyond utterance; I, who but a short while since had the world at my feet, enjoying life, and the riches and pleasure thereof. Shivering with cold — yes, but I must add, consumed with an inward fire.

Terrible truth! That the torment of hell should consist in an awful contrast — cold without and a consuming fire within, compared to which the burning sands of Sahara even seem cool as the limpid wave. And what shall I say of the unutterable anguish —

hell's constant fear of death? For with the growing darkness a growing fear falls upon the tortured soul, agonizing as the pangs of death. Happy if they were but pangs of death! but there is no dying here, only a continuous living over again in the spirit of that most dread of earthly conflicts, a panting for life, as it were, a wailing and moaning, with pitiful cries for mercy, cries for help, but they fall back upon the soul unheard — unheard!

Do you know what it is to be lying on a bed of misery night after night, courting sleep in vain, worn with affliction, trouble, or grief? Let me tell you, then, that this is sheer bliss as compared with the sufferings of a night here, endless in pain as it seems in duration. For at last, poor earthly sufferer, your very sorrows become your lullaby; nature claims her due; you sleep, and sleep drowns you woe, transfiguring it even with rosy-fingered dreams, restoring you to strength the while. And you awake to find that a new day has risen, with grace and hope, and smiling with fresh endeavor.

Happy mortal — ay, thrice happy — whatever your lot may be, however poor and sorrowful you may deem it. For remember that as compared with us here, the most miserable beneath the sun might call themselves blessed, if only they could free themeslves from delusion and take their troubles for what they are. For, strange as it may sound, in the world, which we know to be a world of realities, trouble more or less consists in imagination — "thinking makes it so;" whereas here, where all is shadow and nothingness, misery alone is real. In the world so much depends on how one takes trouble; in hell there is but one way of bearing it — the hard, unyielding *must*.

Oh to be able to sleep, to forget oneself though but

for a moment,— what mercy, what bliss! But why do I add to my pangs by thinking of the impossible? I seem to be weeping, as I write this, bitter tears, but they blot not the unhappy record; like leaden tears they fall back upon the soul, adding to her weight. Did I say tears? Ah, believe me it is but a fashion of speaking!

Thus I sat, spending the endless night — a night of death I had better call it, since it differs so terribly from the worst nights I knew on earth. I suffered an agony of cold, but within me there burned the quenchless torment of sin and sinful desire — a twofold flame, I know not which was strongest; it seized upon me alternately, my thoughts adding fuel to the terrible glow.

My sins! What boots it now to remember them, but I must — I must. The life of sin is behind me, finished and closed; but with fearful distinctness it lies open to my vision, as a page to be read, not merely as a whole, but in all its minutest parts. I seem to have found it out now only that I am a sinner, or rather that I was one, for on earth I somehow did not know it. The successful way in which I managed to suppress that consciousness almost entirely seems to prove, if not my own, at any rate the devil's consummate skill. I say almost entirely; I could not stifle it altogether, but I managed to keep it in a prison so close that it troubled me rarely. And if conscience at times made efforts to be heard, the voice was so gentle that I never hesitated to disregard it. Yes, Satan succeeded so well with me that I never thought of my sins, really forgot them as though they were not.

But now — now? that seeming forgetting truly was the devil's deceit. My sins are all present now; I see them, every one of them, and none is wanting; and indeed their number is far greater than I could have be-

lieved possible. A thousand trivial things — not trifles here, though I once believed them such — raise their front in bitter accusation. Life lies before me as an open book, a record of minutest detail, and what seemed scarce worth the notice once has now assumed its own terrible importance — sin succeeding sin, and the remainder folly. My anguished soul turns hither and thither, writhing and moaning; not a spot is left where she might rest — not a moment's peace to soothe her; shut in with sins innumerable, she is the prey of despair.

And yet I never was what the world calls a bad man. I was selfish, but not void of natural pity; having a carnal mind, but not barren of intellectual tasts; ruled by strong appetites, but too much of a gentleman to give open cause of offense. I was even good-natured, helpful and kind, where it did not clash with some dominant passion. Indeed I was not only a general favorite, but enjoyed universal respect. In short, I was a man whom the world could approve of, and if I cared not to serve the world, the more was I desirous it should serve me. Without faith, and following no aim, I lived to enjoy the moment. Yet I was not always without faith. There had been a time, in the far-off days of childhood when I believed lovingly, ardently; but on entering the world faith, having no root, faded as a flower in the noonday heat. And once again, having reached a certain point in my life, it seemed to revive, to blossom anew; but everything failing, it also failed, and never yielded fruit. At the same time I had never quite plucked it out of the heart. To my dying hour I had a feeling that something of the God-seeking child was latent within me, of the childhood in which I began, but never continued.

In the days of manhood I followed passion. Do you

care to inquire? Fashionable amusement, the excitement of fast living, the enjoyment of beauty, piquant adventure, the pleasure of the senses in short — that is what I lived for.

Oh the fire within me — kindled long ago, in the days even of bodily life! It did not then cause the pain it causes now, or rather — since fire cannot be dissociated from suffering — it burned with a pain akin to delight. But now, alas! there is a consuming emptiness within, desire feeding upon imagination, feeding upon my very soul unappeasably. To be burnt alive would be as nothing compared to that torment, for then the hope would remain that there must be an end. But there is no end now, no hope of deliverance.

And yet I have not confessed all the pangs of that terrible first night. I am ashamed to own what I may not hide! For, apart from all those horrors common to all, I have a grief to myself alone — most of those here have a load of pain pertaining to themselves only — an aching sorrow weighing upon my soul distinctly separate from all general woes; it has not left me for a moment since first I opened my eyes in hell. It is but a little story, but one of those experiences which are of far deeper importance in our lives than would seem credible.

My thirty-first birthday found me in a village tavern away from home. After more than a year's absence — the journey extending as far as the Holy Land — I was returning the unhappiest of mankind, bowed down with mourning, and ill bearing the hurt of disappointed passion. Three we had been on setting out, two only returning. Journeying homeward we stopped on the road, a sudden storm obliging us to seek shelter in a common inn.

There are strange things in life. Having for months been dead to all sympathy, it was so ordered that I should find here an object to rouse me from my stupor — to call me back to life. It was but a ragged boy, some eight or nine years old, whose mother had been one of a troop of strolling actors. For some reason or other the company had broken up, and her body presently was found in a neighboring swamp. He was a poor little fellow, forlorn and neglected, and as shy as a wild thing of the field, disconsolate in his grief. He had loved tenderly, passionately — so had I; he had lost all he had loved — so had I.

But there was more. The boy's nature fascinated me strangely. His impetuosity, his stand-off pride, even his intractable wildness, somehow struck a congenial chord in my own deepest soul. I felt as if I, I only, could understand him; as if I, in his place, would have been just like him. And despite his rags he was a lovely boy. Those dark tearful eyes had an expression that went to the heart; those uncombed locks overhung features which, without being regularly handsome, were intensely attractive. In short, it was one of those boy-faces which Murillo loved to paint. What shall I say, but that the child from the first moment caught my heart? As no one cared to have him, I took him with me .

His mother had gone by the name of Rosalind. The boy just called her " mother," and knew no other name. But the appellation Rosalind to all appearance pertained to the actress only, and there was nothing left to give a clue to her identity. If there had been anything the poor creature took it with her to her watery grave. The only thing leaving a faint hope of eventual discovery was the figure of a swan surrounded by unintelligible

hieroglyphics imperishably etched upon the boy's right arm. He went by the common name of Martin, and spoke a jargon, a jumble rather of several languages, but fraught with unmistakable echoes of my own native tongue.

I took him with me. Three we were on setting out, three returning — but what a change!

He grew up in my care, a nameless foundling. I never discovered the faintest light to unravel the mystery of his birth; but I always believed that the swan upon his arm sooner or later would assist in explaining his extraction. Martin hardly ever quitted my presence, and people said I had adopted him by way of a plaything. Maybe there was some truth in this. The boy's lower nature blossomed luxuriantly, at the cost, surely, of his moral development. Conscious of force, and exuberant with unshaped longings, passionate and self-willed, he was nowise easily managed. I am ashamed to say I sometimes took an evil delight in playing with the child's slumbering passions, now exciting them to full liberty, now reining them up suddenly. Still, he was more than a plaything to me: he ruled my heart. This may partly be accounted for by the fact that I saw my own nature reflected in the boy's; perhaps, also, the strange affection was merely fancy-born, the whim of a moment growing into habit. That much is certain, I loved the boy. And I could count them on my fingers, I fear, whom I loved beside myself.

The child responded to my affection ardently, passionately. It sometimes happened, when I had teased him in ungenerous amusement, and he, stung to fury, refused submission, that I, in assertion of power, would place my foot upon his neck, when he would humble himself suddenly, and clasping my knees, would wail for

forgiveness. At such moments he would have borne the vilest cruelty, patiently hoping for a return of tenderness. He whom the direst punishment at times could not move, now spent himself in tears at my feet, looking to me as to the one soul beside him in the universe. That love of the child's touched me deeply, appealing to all that was best and truest in my heart. We would make peace again and renew the bond of affection, which was tied all the faster for such incidents. Thus love moved between us, swelling in tides, now of wrath, now of tenderness, till suddenly I discovered that the boy had grown — grown to be a man in my likeness, strong in the flesh and of powerful self-love.

And the time was which ripened into a crisis between us, worse than anything that had happened before. He had defied me where I could never brook defiance, and I cast him from me. How could the fellow dare to rival me in woman's favor!

He left me, insulted but unconquered, and burning with scorn. I should never see him again, he said; and he was the man to do as he threatened. Some time after I received a letter from him, offering me the alternative of yielding to him or losing him — he would go to the Turks, to the devil, he said. I took no notice of that ultimatum, but demanded his entire surrender, unconditionally. Time passed and I began to think I had lost him. It was a fear which troubled me, preyed upon me; for whatever our disagreement, I loved him still. And if indeed he were lost, my heart told me that I — I had worked his ruin.

And then I fell ill of that last illness, ending in death. There came a second letter against all expectation, mysteriously expressed but plain of import. He wrote humbly, gently, as I had never known him.

He entreated me to see him; he would come back to me a repentant child. He had found out that which would heal every breach between us: a Higher Power had spoken. There was mention of *her* in the letter, but all was so broken, so ambiguously expressed, that it left me quite in the dark as to whether his discovery concerned himself or her.

The letter remained unanswered; I was too ill to write, and cared not to trust any third person with a message between us.

What, then, was his discovery to have worked such a change in him? and whom did it concern, himself or her? That question troubled me to my dying moment, and who knows but that it proved a nail also in my coffin. Erinnys-like it pursued me to very hell, adding more than anything else to my torment here. As a live coal it burns upon my soul. What was it about him or about her? And there are other questions: How did it go with him when I had cast him off — I, whom alone he loved and knew upon earth? Was I indeed the cause of his ruin? Alas! these things are a hell in hell!

LETTER III.

How long I sat, shut in with myself and darkness, how long that terrible night continued, I cannot tell — maybe a year, maybe some hours only. This only I know, that in the space of that single night I lived over again the whole of my earthly life, and what inconceivable horrors are included in this statement!

Light broke at last, but oh how slowly! The walls of darkness seemed to shift, making way for the faintest streak of dawn. This time of expectation, of hope — if so I may call it — was the least painful time I had yet known in hell. And as I waited, longed for the returning light, a shadow, as it were, of forgetfulness wrapped me about. Ah, surely forgetfulness is the one state of bliss to be imagined here! Did I speak of light? Alas it is only less of darkness — light there is none in hell. And forgetfulness is not real, but illusive here.

But poor as the light was, it roused me to something like love of existence even. I gathered up my wretched being and went my way, following the direction of the breaking dawn. How long I moved, or how far, is of no consequence. The terrors of hell were about me. Presently, however, I reached a spot where I could rest. Did I say rest? Once for all, let me beg you not to be misled by such meaningless expressions — meaningless here, and proving old habit merely. In this place of anguish rest, in the sense you take it, naturally is impossible; all I meant to say is that I reached a spot

where the pressure of motion quitted me for a while, and I stopped.

It is strange how soon I came to understand my surroundings, how soon I found my way among the vain appearances and the wretched nothingness about me. Instinctively I adapted myself to what I saw, doing as others did — in a manner however, shaped by my own individuality. I knew I was only adding my paltry share, that hell might be, what it is, a caricature of the world and her doings. I knew, moreover, that I was being mocked the while, a very fool of vanities.

You must know, then, that each wretched being here is moved by an irresistible impluse to imitate his life on earth, to continue what in sinful folly he worked in that life. And, strange to say, as I have already hinted, we can all obtain here what we like; one need but think of anything, and there it is. Passion and wrongful desires rule here as they do in the world, only the more horribly, being void of substance. In the world they are clothed — clothed in a semblance of beauty even; lawless and pernicious though they are, they at least own the garment of nature. But here they are mere skeletons, unclothed of the flesh, an insult to nature, continuing in the evil bent of former habit, yet incapable of aught but showing their miserable nakedness. For the imaginings of hell are hollow and empty, void of truth and reality, bereft of all means of satisfaction. And yet the very punishment of hell consists in this, that we are driven to conform to this maddening unreality, this death-breathing nothingness. No matter how deeply conscious we are of the vanity of our doings — no matter how we loath them — they have come to be our masters; we are driven, helplessly driven, to for ever trying to be what we were on earth.

Supposing, then, that a number of spirits agree we will have a town here, that town straightway appears on the scene; or if others say, let us have a church here and a theatre and a public park, or woods and a lake and mountains, it is all there as soon as imagined. And not only that each one sees for himself what he has called up in vain desire: it is seen by all with whom he comes into contact. But everything is shadowy — nay, less than shadowy: it is empty conceit. Such a state naturally includes change upon change, incessant unrest; this also is vanity.

Neither is there any lack of assisting spirits to carry into effect any desired show. Does any one here wish to set up an establishment, to live in style, as the phrase went on earth, he is straightway surrounded by faithless stewards, drunken butlers, thieving servants of all kinds. If you imagine that no one would care to be a servant here, you are mistaken, for the inhabitants of hell, in a mere outward way also, carry on the habits of life. Is there any one here who likes to general an army, he will find plenty of bloodthirsty ruffians to obey his behests, provided indeed he *was* a general in his days gone by; for mind you, without a name a man even here could not make his way.

Upon this information you will not be surprised to learn that I have a pleasant abode here not far from town, the image of my own old country-house, with park and river to please my fancy; that I am a gentleman, and see much company. I frequent fashionable society now as formerly, since it yields me gratification, both private and public. Few men knew and drained the sources of enjoyment more thoroughly than I did. But now?— ah, pity me not, for your pity cannot alter the fact. This then is the misery of hell for me; I am hungering

after enjoyment, pure or impure, but there is no sense left to gratify; reality has vanished, the greed only remains. Is it not madness?

And let me whisper it to you, I am daily meeting friends and acquaintances; but I shall not betray them, remembering how well-bred the world is. It would be a shame to hurt the feelings of ladies and gentlemen of respectable position by insinuating that any of their relatives *are* here. Let them call their departed ones blessed: it will not lessen the torments they endure.

Shall I venture upon a local description of hell? I doubt I shall not be able, but will make the attempt.

Hell has its own geography, but no one can tell how far its realms extend; it is infinite — that maybe is the most correct estimate to be given. I believe earth, sun, and moon, and all the planets, would not nearly fill it. But what foolish talk, there being neither space nor time here. And as for boundaries?— on one side only, far, far away, hell has its boundary; whether any one ever reached it I cannot tell.

In the direction of that pale twilight, which decreases and increases alternately, there is a great gulf, a fathomless abyss, separating hell from Paradise. It *is* Paradise whence that radiance proceeds. And from the abyss, at regular intervals apparently, dead darkness gushes forth, repressing the faint far-off light of heaven, till the last ghostly glimmer is gone. Then it is night with us, the abyss appearing as a lake of molten fire, but its flames are void of light-giving power. That is Satan's residence, and the abode of damned souls. I speak of it with fear and trembling. Gradually the abyss, as it were, eats up its own darkness, the fair light reappearing and growing, till we see it as a tender radiance, clear as the twilight of a summer morn. And at

THERE IS A GREAT GULF, A FATHOMLESS ABYSS

times, as though a curtain of mist and cloud were suddenly rent asunder, a cataract of light bursts forth victoriously, overflowing from the heart of glory. Hell stands dazzled, struck to the core as it were. For in beauty and bliss eternal a vision of Paradise is given to the damned ones — no, not the damned ones, for though cast into hell we are not yet judged; it is given to those who, like the rich man, lift up their eyes in torment. And it is not only Paradise we see, but the blessed ones who dwell there.

All this I have learned,— as yet I have not seen it. But now, since dawn is increasing, we seem to be nearing that hour,— shall I say that happy hour? ah no — most dread! most dread! I cannot tell how long the light goes on increasing or decreasing; there is no judging of the length of dawn, as there is no judging of the duration of night itself. According to human ideas, it would seem to be a space of several years. The vision of Paradise, I feel sure, fills but a moment, but some call it long, fearfully long. Shall I rejoice to see that moment, or must I dread it?

Again, hell has a river, the waters of which are heavy, dark and muddy. You will be thinking of the waters of Lethe. Ah no, my friend, there is no Lethe here whence souls might draw forgetfulness: that is a happy myth; but the river I speak of is real, terribly real. It is fed by the falsehood and injustice of the world; every lie, every wrong, helps to swell it. That is why its waters are so turbid, so fearfully foul, looking like clotted blood at times. And sometimes, when the world is more wicked than usual, the river rises and floods its banks, leaving stench and pestilence behind it. It is scarcely to be endured. But we, hardened spectres of hell, we endure.

Sometimes, I am told, it rains here and snows, but not so often as one would think. It happens when folly and vanity upon earth overflow their measure. The world can stand a good deal, we know, but there are times when even the world has too much of it. The surplus then will drop into hell, and we say, by way of former fashion of speech: Look, it rains; or, Behold it snows!

There is in hell not only a certain natural succession of time, but also something of social and political order. Families herd together, the souls of one and the same century like to congregate. And there is a kind of progressive development. The most recent arrivals, as a rule, take the lowest place, advancing to make room for fresh troops appearing. Those who in the world were of one way of thinking, or alike in manner of acting, soon meet here, though of different nationality or separate centuries. Thus there is here a town of injustice, called also the town of politicians; there is a town of the Holy Inquisition; a gigantic city of Jews, of Mormons; a town of Antediluvians, and many others.

I begin to understand the moving-springs of hell. It is insatiate desire on the one hand, and remorse on the other — I had almost said sorrow; but that is too sweet a grace, admitting of sorrow for sin, for opportunity wasted, and that is unknown here; it is a dull flinty grief, a mere wailing for pain. The punishment of hell is twofold, but after all it is the self-same retribution. Some are driven continuously to brood over the same evil passions they indulged in on earth, satisfaction alone being absent; or with horror and loathing are obliged again and again to commit in the spirit the self-same crimes they polluted their days in the flesh. The miser forever is dreaming of riches, the voluptuary of unclean-

ness, the glutton of feasting, the murderer of his bloody deed. Others, on the contrary, are pursuing the very things they neglected on earth; they know it is hopeless, but pursue them they must. Thus men of unjust dealing are anxiously trying to right the wrong, the unmerciful to do deeds of charity, the unnatural parent to live for her children, the suicide to prolong his days.

But whatever we suffer, our torment is not to be viewed in the light of final punishment — that is coming — we await the day of doom; no, it is merely the natural consequence of our life on earth. Oh, men and women, yet walking on earth, consider this! that all sin, great or small, has its own irretrievable consequence, which — ay, think of it — extends far beyond the limits of life, even into hell. And if mere consequence may be so terrible, what must be the punishment to come?

This then is the law of hell: we are not tormented — we torment ourselves! Yet remember that in dying everything depends on whether we lived in the faith of the Son of God, who gave His life that men might be saved. Our sins have that dread importance in as far as they testify that we did not believe. Do you marvel that I speak of God? Ah me, He is still our God! And we know that there is a Son of God who came into the world to save sinners, who loved them unto death, even the death of the Cross. But we know nothing of the way of salvation: everything is forgotten — the very name of the Saviour. We consume ourselves in terrible efforts to remember, were it but the faintest remnant of saving knowledge, but alas it is vain — not even His name! Could we remember that name, call it back to our hearts, I doubt not — I doubt not — even we might be saved. But it is gone — it is too late! too late!

It is incredible how much I have forgotten; indeed, I might say I have forgotten everything except myself. Yes, that is it. I have not forgotten self; on the contrary, whatever of the past concerns my person and my life has followed me hither with a minuteness of detail as strange as it is painful. But the clothes of self, as it were,— the things I once possessed by knowledge, by intellectual acquirement,— they have vanished together with the gifts of mammon and the vanities of the flesh. You will not be surprised then that the feeling of nakedness is so terribly present with me.

I have brought nothing hither but myself. And what comprises this self but a burning remorse which can never be stilled; a greed of desire which can never be satisfied; an unquenchable longing for things left behind; innumerable recollections of sins great and small, causing insufferable anguish, all being equally bitter, equally fraught with vainest regret! This is the picture of myself, O God,— of myself in hell.

LETTER IV.

THE circumstances in which I grew up in the world could not be called happy. My parents were so unlike in character and so little suited to each other that people were fully justified in wondering how they could have married at all. My father was a plain homely man, somewhat retiring and unassuming; he was the head of a well-to-do house of business of considerable mercantile importance. But he was not at first sight credited with personal weight or influence; people would easily slight him. And yet there was that in the quiet expression of his face, in the calm clearness of his eye, which convinced those who took the trouble of knowing him that he was not a man of the ordinary type.

My mother, whom I always considered the chief person in the house, was a woman of rare perfections, very handsome, very gracious, and highly esteemed. Age even flattered her, dealing kindly by her beauty; but that, perhaps, was due to the fact that her life never flowed in the channels of violent passion. Some believed her cold and wanting in feeling; but it would be a great mistake to imagine her without the warmth of energy. She was a clever woman, and although she never asserted herself so as to give offense, she always managed to have her way. Who, indeed, could have dreamt to turn her will aside, since I, her idol and her darling never once succeeded in going against it? She was a remarkably clever woman.

The world admired her; whether she was loved I cannot say. Maybe she loved none excepting myself.

Did I love her? Well, if I must answer the question honestly, I am bound to say I also rather admired than loved her. And, indeed, she was worthy of all admiration. Never anywhere did I meet a woman who was so thoroughly what the world calls a lady — mind you, I mean a lady in the world's own acceptation. She was just perfect — perfect in beauty, in manner, in bearing, in dress, in all the ways of life prescribed by society; perfect too in the fullfilment of what she considered her duty, irreproachable in conduct, a very pattern of piety, appearing clothed in spotlessness as with a garment; never saying or doing or permitting anything that might breath suspicion on her perfection. In short, she was a lady to the least movement of her finger, to the minutest folds of her dress. And she preserved her reputation, even adding to it daily.

Looking back now, I understand her — as indeed I understand the whole of the sad past — with a new insight. I see plainly now that to her the world was everything: it was her guide, its approval being the aim of her every ambition. I do not mean to say by this that she cared not for things good and beautiful in any other light, and she really cultivated religion. No one could appear more assiduously obedient to the behests of piety than my mother, with her veneration for the clergy, her regular attendance at church; and no one ever quitted her presence without feeling edified. Not undeservedly might duty and propriety be termed the guardian saints that watched her every step.

The stately mansion we inhabited was divided in two, figuratively speaking, my mother presiding in one way — my father, though quietly, in another; I, their child, seemed to belong altogether to my mother's dominion. I shrank from my father, feeling afraid of his quiet eye.

Apparently he was satisfied with this state of affairs, but I feel sure now that in his heart he loved me.

My mother's rule was marked by gaiety; she loved to live in style. My father, excused by business, but rarely took part in her doings; and if he made his appearance at times, I, foolish child, felt almost ashamed of his presence,— he looked so little like the master of the house in the simplicity of his habits and unpretending ways.

There was another inmate of our house, my father's sister, strangely contrasting with my mother. The world had begun to call her an old maid; and she certainly was peculiar, a mixture of unfashionableness and singularity. People called her eccentric, whimsical; and indeed one never knew what she might not be doing next. She was no "lady" like my mother, and nowise perfect, though she could look remarkably ladylike whenever she thought it worth while. She was extremely natural, her heart always bubbling over with its inmost thoughts; there was something utterly naïve in her straightforward openness and the unstudied ways of her conversation. My mother, I believe, thought her queer; but in truth she was the only person who ever knew how to call up a smile in my father's face. And this she looked upon as her own special vocation, ever mindful of it. No; Aunt Betty could nowise be held up as a pattern; and as for perfections, she had but one — a heart brimful of kindness, ever ready to sacrifice itself, making it her one delight to see others happy. In fact she never thought of herself. And that heart of hers was filled with a faith as deep and fervent and single-minded as any child's. No doubt her Christian life knew its times of dearth as of plenty — it could not be otherwise with a nature like hers — but her heart, never-

theless, was firmly grounded. She had God in her heart. And though she might get entangled with her duties, and even blunder about God's commandments, the one commandment, fulfilling the law, ever shone as a beacon to her soul that, loving God, we should love one another.

She had hardly ever been separated from my father, and now she seemed indispensable in his house — that great two-parted house. If I were to call her our Cinderella, it would most certainly be an ill-chosen comparison, and yet a true one. She was queen of the household; but in that position she managed to be the servant of all. Every trouble, every care, she took upon her shoulders, wearing herself out for each and all of us. She liked it. Any attempt to oppose her in this respect roused her self-assertion, meek and mild though she was in aught beside. My mother, being the lady, never touched domestic concerns with a finger; everything was given up to Aunt Betty, even the care for myself and my father. But household worries were the least of her vicarious burden; she felt called to take upon herself whatever was disagreeable to any one else, making herself a shield and warder-off in every possible direction, and being the willing scapegoat even, if thereby she could comfort blundering servant or careless child. She appeared to consider that her life's calling,— she who, despite her simplicity, was by far the wisest of us,— and indefatigable were her attempts to cover the want of harmony between my parents. She might in truth be called the bond of union between them. It was evidently my father for whom she thus sacrificed herself, loving him with a sisterly devotion as beautiful as rare. How well she understood how to brighten his home, to turn aside the edge of disappointment, and flood the

place with her own abundant warmth. Was he sad,— how she would cheer him, and with a show of gaiety, hiding perhaps her own aching heart, strive to heal the breach that separated him from his wife, and, alas! from his child as well.

And how lovingly she did her very best for me,— the sweetest, kindest of aunts! My mother indulged me fondly; I ought not to say that she spoiled me,— her cleverness stood in the way of that; but I owe it to my aunt that, in spite of all indulgence, I was a good and even pious child. It was she who taught me to read my Bible, sowing the good seed in my heart, and nothing in after life ever did more for me than her loving and God-fearing example. The recollection of that early time is unspeakably sweet to me even now in the bitterness of hell. With what power of love she drew me is plainly evident from the fact that whenever I could I stole away from the queenly presence of my mother — though there was never a plaything I wished for but she gave it me — to seek Aunt Betty, trotting behind her to kitchen and storeroom, or spending hours in the one little chamber she called her own. That was the happiest time of my life.

Thanks to Aunt Betty, then, I was brought up in the fear of God; but though the seed was sown, and the flower even blossomed, it never yielded fruit. As I grew up, the power of the sensual was upon me, and I early conformed to the ways of the world. Aunt Betty died; she had positively worn herself to death. At such cost the service of love at times is given. Her loss moved me deeply, but the impression did not last. I had begun to attend at my father's counting-house. My mother had destined me for the army, or, if possible, to some diplomatic career. I was gifted with my

mother's beauty, was heir to my father's fortune, and not wanting in ability. She took pride in me, and naturally wished I should be a credit to her in the eyes of the world. But although apart from Aunt Betty I had always been left to my mother's guidance, my father strenuously opposed her wishes in this respect; I should follow in his footsteps and carry on the time-honored firm. Life, he said, would yield its own battles apart from the army. He was right, but a sorry soldier I proved.

I was gifted with the pleasant but dangerous talent of making friends wherever I went — a pernicious talent even, with a disposition like mine. Not only did the world open her arms to receive me, but to clasp me, as the fair nymphs of the well clasped Hylas, the beautiful youth, dragging him helplessly to the deep. Even before my lips wore the first downy sign of manhood, I was already corrupted. Of misleading companions there was no lack, those of my own sex not being the worst. Such things, however, avenge themselves: being mislead at first, I began to mislead.

But being brought under my father's immediate influence, he did his utmost to lift me from the slough, sparing neither admonition, nor rebuke, nor even restraint. It availed not; I evaded his guidance, and even deceived him. More successful were my mother's attempts; for while, on the one hand, she managed to let me see that she could condone if not actually excuse, she yet so powerfully pleaded the claims of prudence and position that I promised to mend my ways. And I did mend them. I carefully considered the extreme of dissipation, avoiding discovery and scandal.

Self-restraint was not without effort, for my nature thirsted after pleasure. But though passion-ruled, I

had a strong will to act as a curb where I chose, and the worldly wisdom of my mother taught me the advisability of exerting that will.

I was about one-and-twenty when my father died; never since we lost Aunt Betty, can I remember having seen a smile on his face — there was no one to call it up when she had gone. And now he left us. My mother retired on her jointure — satisfied, as she said, to have done her duty in the world. And I, at an early age, was admitted to a partnership in the firm, of which my father's brother now was head. Soon after I fell seriously ill.

This brings me to one of the darkest episodes of my life. It is but an epsiode, a draught of passing enjoyment, but fraught with the origin of my deepest woe. Could I washed of all my sin, this one dark recollection would never leave me.

The illness happily had been got over, leaving me prostrate. It was early in the spring. My medical attendant advised me to leave town as soon as possible for the country or the seaside. But I was a prey to ill-humor and fretfulness. I liked the advice, and did not like it. I did not care for our own place in the country; it was not quiet enough, I said, and I hated the sea. As it chanced a sudden whim came to the rescue. We had been to the lakes the previous autumn; memory carried me back to a keeper's lodge, delightfully situated in a leafy solitude, a very bower of clematis and roses. Peace herself could not dream of a more congenial retreat. If I was to go for change of air that was the place I should fancy.

Difficulties were got over, and I went. An honest old keeper lived there with his daughter Annie, she being on the verge of womanhood. Annie! — how little

did I think that this name one day would sound so terrible to my ears.

I recovered quickly and strength returned. But lovely as the spot was, life without incident did not amuse me. From sheer ennui I began to make love to Annie. She was an inexperienced country-girl; but the very naiveté of her ignorance was enchanting. She was as free and natural as the birds of the dell, a very outcome of her surroundings, fresh as the dewy morn and fragrant as the woodland air. Wild and untaught, yet sweetly delicate, that child of nature soon cast a spell over my fancy. We were left alone fearlessly. Her father saw but a child in her — she was barely seventeen — and she was engaged to wait on me.

But Annie, at first, was proof to flattery; light-footed and light-hearted, she turned its edge unconsciously, and I made no way with her. Always merry and always happy, full of kindliness and grace, she flitted about me, helpful as an angel, but coy and unapproachable. Not that she saw danger — she did not even suspect it; it was merely the instinctive dread holding all children of nature aloof from snares. The bird on the sunny bough will look at you, even sing to you, but you shall not touch it. Brimming with life's enjoyment she was easily delighted, and sprightly as a squirrel in the wood. She knew affection, but what we call love had at that time not entered her consciousness. Never had I seen a happier mind, a fresher or more charming disposition; the sky of her soul was as clear as the blue vault above, her singing as blithe as the lark's on the wing, and she cared not whether the sun shone or not.

But in my selfish soul I said, "Thou coy little bird, see if I don't catch thee!" Not that I loved her — the difference of rank was too great; but I was for

plucking the flower, though I should throw it away after a while.

Later, however, repentance with poignant sting seized upon my heart — there was some good left in me as yet; I felt deeply touched, moreover, by the child's entire love and humble surrender. Was she bewitching before, she was not less so now.

I began to love her, or to believe I loved her, and thought of a possible marriage.

But it fell out differently. My mother had been informed, and set herself to bring me to reason. How cleverly she did it! — not rousing opposition, but none the less effectively showing me the utter foolishness of my intention. There was not a shade of derision in her manner, yet I felt ridiculed. She never called it a silly freak, but she brought me to view it as such. Had I really loved Annie, no doubt my mother could not so easily have influenced me. As it was, I suddenly seemed to come to my senses; it was not love — only pity for the girl.

My mother spoke about it freely; and presently she succeeded in directing my attention elsewhere. She had adopted an orphan child, of American parentage distantly related to her own family. Lily might be about nine or ten years old now, and so far I had scarcely bestowed any notice upon her. My mother would hint now and then at the rare flower of beauty slumbering in the buds of promise. And presently, in so many words, she pointed out to me that in some seven or eight years Lily might not only have ripened to matchless charms, but as an heiress of no ordinary kind could not fail to draw the eyes of men. If then, I would give up Annie, and think of Lily instead, she would try to keep her for me. When Lily should have

reached maturity, it would be just about the right time for me to settle in life, and I might hunt the world over, and not find her equal anywhere. That was true enough, and imagination had been set to work. Since that time I loved to think of the promising little Creole.

Lily was undeniably a lovely creature, as harmless as a dove, but with me anticipating fancy revelled in possession. It was easy for my mother therefore to win me to her plan. There was something indescribably charming in this new relationship. To look upon Lily as my own property, though she knew it not; to watch her unfolding charm upon charm in sweetest innocence; to call her mine — mine in the very care that guarded her; to gather up treasure, as it were, for my own delightful harvest.

I allowed my mother full liberty to bring the affair with Annie to a satisfactory end, as she termed it, having given her my word not to see the girl again. A real sacrifice, was it not? Hell shows it now in its own true light.

LETTER V.

I BEGIN to feel at home here. At home? How full of sweetest echoes in this word. Its very sound would warm one's heart on earth; it is bitter here — doubly bitter for memories gone. It does not lessen hell to get used to it; we are even forced to make ourselves at home here, just as we are obliged to be what once we were.

That irresistible impulse to be continuously doing the works of our earthly life, to pursue with a burning greed a vain and shadowy existence, may well be termed hell's daily bread. The evil desire alone is real: the sense that might lend it expression is dead. You have heard of Tantalus and Sisyphus — it may help you to conceive our state. All is illusion here, the very fire I told you of, raging in imagination merely — within us that is — and yet what an awful reality!

You understand, then, that I have resumed old habits, not willingly, but under compulsion, following the old bent with a helpless disgust. However, I cannot but add that I have been tolerably fortunate, falling on my feet in society, as it were, and a very nice set I have joined. I have been lucky in renewing many an old acquaintance, and have made friends with people whom one would have been glad to know on earth. You would be indeed surprised if I were indiscreet enough to mention names! But I shall content myself with generalizing. It is strange how many of the so-called respectable people one meets here; in fact, they form the nucleus of society in hell as they do on earth. I

might even say good people, meaning those worthy folk whose one desire it is to go through life comfortably, quite willing no one else should hunger, provided they themselves have all they need; satisfied with their lot in the world, not perhaps a grand one, and caring for nothing beyond it — never dreaming that the less fortunate might be their brothers and sisters after all. Just look about you wherever you please — the world is full of such. They are good to themselves and good to their children, thanking God for the means of being so. They spend their years as if this life's business were all that needs to be thought of, living for their families, their home concerns, whether in drudgery or in ease, both men and women. You little think that daily life, with its legitimate cares,— ay, even what you call your duty by house and home,— may be the snare to bring your soul to hell! There are men who rush through life in the whirl of amusement; others sleep through it; others again wear themselves out for its paltry amenities, calling that *to live* forsooth! And before they are aware of it, their race is run, they close their eyes to open them again, surprised perhaps, in the pangs of hell.

Oh could I live over again but a single year of my earthly span — I do not mean for my own sake merely! — I might perhaps be able to warn some few of those excellent men whose ideas of life are wrapped up in the counting-house on the one hand, and in the prosperity of their family on the other — of those devoted wives and mothers who spend themselves for the comforts of home. I say some few of them, well knowing that not many would believe me.

Nay, even as regards so-called philanthropists I have made the unexpected discovery that some of them —

I say some — who have really one way or another benefited thousands, have lived to their own ruin. Has the world been loud in their praises? — learn wisdom, my friend, and overrate not the world's approval.

It is, indeed, a strange fancy, prevalent among men, that only the wicked go to hell. You poor deluded ones, listen to my words: it is incredible, I assure you, how little is needed to take a man to hell — that is to say, if he dies without having found his Savior. For without Him the soul is unable to bear the smallest weight of wrong; while with Him — yes, with Him — she will wing herself to heaven in the face of mountains of sin. Do you know that Savior? I ask you as one who can never know Him now!

There are many here, I assure you, who have never committed any particular crime. The world, with its notions of right and wrong, would cry out for justice if it were but known! And why are they here? They never felt the sting of conscience, leading respectable lives, laying the unction of goodness to their souls,— but they died and went to hell. No demon of evil ruled their lives, and yet they are here — oh heaven, where is thy justice? — in a like damnation with ourselves! The torment of hell for such people consists in having nothing to do here, no counting-house to attend, no families to provide for. Not ruled by passion, they are slaves to life's habit, and the latter may be as terrible a taskmaster as the former.

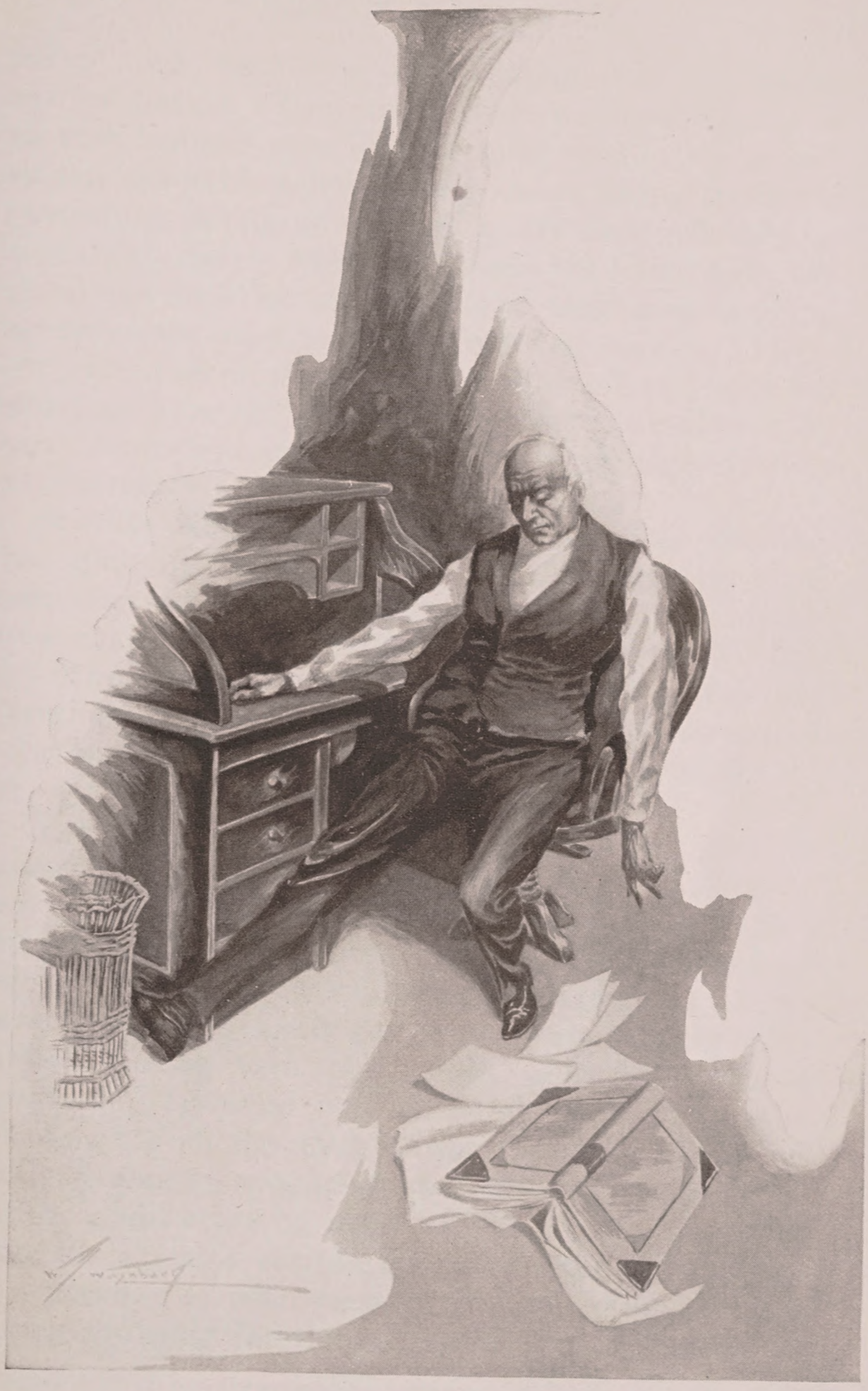
Thus much is certain, if having nothing to live for could kill people, and if one *could* die in hell, many here would die of sheer hankering after their earthly drudgery.

My own existence, once I was properly introduced, was speedily filled with amusement. Are you surprised

that I should say "introduced?" But we are no Goths here, and society with us also attends to its rules. If it needs little to bring one to hell, it is not so easy to make one's way into the fashionable circles of this place of woe. It is with us just as with you, with this difference only: the world asks who a man is, the question here being who he was.

Now I, in the world, was allowed to be handsome and refined, a man who could pride himself on his gentlemanly qualities, not to mention a considerable fortune. Here I no longer am this man, but I affect his semblance. Yet I must warn you against imagining that there is any pretence; no, it is nature, downright nature.

At first I was positively overwhelmed with calls and invitations. Here also novelty is much sought after. If I had brought nothing with me but the news of some foolish fashion lately adopted in the world, I should have been considered an acquisition. But, without flattering myself, I may say I brought more — a fashionable finish of the most faultless description having ever been the very essence of my aims. Shall I tell you of a merry club-dinner to which I was asked lately? The party assembled was of doubtful reputation — high living, drink, and gluttony seemed their watchword; nor was it complimentary to my antecedents to be invited, for with me the beautiful maxim, "moderation in all things," had ever covered a multitude of sins, and I had always been careful to avoid vulgarity. However, there I was; the fare was exquisite, the wine splendid. A jovial company they appeared, to judge from the loose jokes and ribald anecdotes passing between the pleasures of the table. And what shall I say of the temptations born of surfeit, coursing through the heated



HAVING NOTHING TO DO

veins? Ah, they were not wanting, but satisfaction was an illusion. I refrain — there was nothing real in all that banquet save its incitement to sin; we preyed on our miserable selves, eating and drinking leaving a nauseating feeling of emptiness, the very jokes being unbearably stale. Men of all kinds are found here, but vainly you look for one capable of producing anything to refresh the mind by genuine mirth or novelty. However, eat and drink we must, and laugh and joke we must; we were obliged, I mean, whether we liked it or not. Now you understand perhaps, though faintly, what it means to join in festivity in hell.

At that club-dinner, where nothing was wanting that gluttony could dream of, the thought of some poor man on earth eating his crust in the sweat of his brow again and again presented itself to my mind. The dry bread that satisfies his hunger, the beer or tea that quenches his thirst, what a royal feast is his as compared with ourselves. For he *does* eat, and *is* satisfied, but we — oh vainest deception!

Was it not that excellent hero, Achilles, who, in occupy any favored position here, be it of king or most miserable man on earth than king of the realm below? This is but wisdom of the Greeks, but how true! — how true! I too would far rather spend my days upon earth amid the most overwhelming difficulties, battling with care, want, or suffering, than occupy any favoured position here, be it of king or epicure. Of all the fools of the world's training he, surely, is greatest who takes away his own life, thinking that he could never be worse off than he is. In sooth, whatever a man's earthly lot may be, be sure it may be a paradise to what he goes to meet. He may find himself yearning for the misery he quitted; indeed, if

you could give him back that misery tenfold, he would seize it eagerly and bless you for the gift.

Still the number of actual suicides, comparatively speaking, is small; a far larger class of men content themselves with shortening their days by continuous grumblings and a dismal unsatisfied frame of mind. If shortening their days were but all, and if thereby they did at least better themselves for the time being! But the fact is, they all but kill life with discontent. They are dissatisfied with themselves, with their fellows, with all the world, with the very air which they breathe and the day which is given them. Poor fools, the day is short and night is at hand! And why are they dissatisfied? Because health is not all it should be, or the world at times crosses them; because their position in life but imperfectly suits their nature and liking, and they would desire a better lot; because perhaps their battle is harder than other people's, or, at worst, their whole life a failure falling short of dearest hope?

I do not mean to underrate these things — on the contrary, I do own that life to most men is fraught with sorrow; but I say this: Could you but view matters from the vantage-ground of hell, you who lessen life by discontent, you would gain that much of wisdom, that our days on earth, whatever of trouble, of care and vexation, be bound up with them, are yet capable of yielding very real happiness. So much depends on how we take things. If, instead of fixing upon trouble as something foreign to yourselves or hostile to your being, looking, upon yourselves as miserable in consequence, you could but open your soul to that trouble and, rising from inertness, accept it as a very part of your existence, how different things would appear! Many a trouble, moreover, is but imaginary,

and if dealt with sensibly would dwindle away; while many a real trouble, on the other hand, by your striving to take it aright, might become an impulse of new endeavor, changing the very face of your life and leading you to a better happiness than before you aimed at. Ah, indeed, if you could but view matters from hell you would come to see that man is able to bear a load of trouble, and that, confronting want and misery, he may yet attain a state of happiness worth the having! You would find that every day of that life which now you make a burden to yourselves and to others is precious beyond words, a gracious gift of God for which you cannot be grateful enough. You would understand that I, hungering and longing, would wish to be in your place — ay, and count myself blessed to bear the burden which you consider so grievous. But what boots it that *I* see it all so plainly now; it is too late for me,— too late.

That fashionable people in hell have their so-called grand evening parties will hardly surprise you; we have dances, "at homes," and all those things set store by in the world. But if this sort of stylish living even on earth is unutterably hollow, what must it be here where the very air we breathe is vanity and nothingness? Looking back I can scarcely credit now how I could wrong my better self for the sake of that vile habit of attending parties. What is a party in the very society which calls itself polite? Is it not as if some vicious goblin had a hand in it, bringing together twenty, fifty, even a hundred people, each of whom has his own cosy fireside — men and women who for the most part have little or nothing in common, but needs must meet beneath staring chandeliers, the spirit of falsehood among them? Vanity rules, and when the

goblin has thoroughly fooled them and lights turn pale, they each go home faged and tattered. Host and hostess say, "What a mercy it's over!" Each visitor says, 'I am thankful to go to bed"— are you, poor fools of fashion?

But if it seems a marvel now how I also, in days gone by, could sacrifice myself to the so-called claims of society, I need not marvel that I do so here. It was by choice then,— it is under compulsion now; it is as if ten thousand goblins fooled ue — we know it but cannot withstand.

The object of parties with us is just the same as with you: to be seen, to be admired, to make oneself agreeable — not so much in order to please your neighbour as to be thought pleasant yourself — and to hide it amiably if you think people a bore. There is one marked difference, however, placing us often in a position both painful and ridiculous. What should you say if at any of your great social gatherings you could look through people's clothes — those fine clothes put on so carefully — through them, I say, to the very piece of humanity they hide, and not only through them, but deeper still, to the core of the heart beneath? It is so here! Supposing, then, you walk up to some old crone, saying, with your most engaging smile — "Delighted to see you!" thinking to yourself at the same time — "I wish she were at Jericho!"— I leave you to imagine the figure you cut. I give this as an example only — as a clew, rather; think it out further and see where it leaves you! But even to this one gets used in hell, fortifying oneself with a kind of frivolous impudence, without which intercourse would be simply unbearable. The incident I quoted of course leaves the advantage with the old crone; but the moment she

opens her lips her interlocutor has the best of it, for he can see through her clothes as she saw through his. They are quits then.

However, as I said, it is not merely ludicrous but painful — offering, moreover, an unsurmountable obstacle to all courtship. It is utterly impossible here to fool a woman, be she ever so frail. All the fine words of hell cannot delude her, for she sees through them. From this point of view we form a most virtuous company. Indeed, flattery and compliments with us are exceedingly difficult to pass, the heart betraying the man in quite another sense than with you.

You can hardly picture to yourself how much of the truly surprising, if not interesting, may be experienced here in a single day. The world, as seen from hell, is the land of dreams and imaginings, appearing beautiful and pleasant none the less. And, absurdly paradoxical as it may sound here only, where all reality has vanished, reality in uncompromising nakedness is upon us. Are they friends or foes that meet, they soon speak the truth to one another. Such mutual confessions, on the whole, are little edifying, and, since there are no secrets here, at once flit from circle to circle for general merriment. Do you care to have examples? Here are some recent tit-bits.

A. had been killed in a duel which he fought to avenge an insult offered to his handsome young wife. Quite recently he somewhat unexpectedly met his late opponent, who, having gone the way of all flesh, had come to hell. Wrathfully he taxed him with former wrong, but the latter made answer quite coolly:

"Silly man, do you mean to fight me again for nothing whatever? Let bygones be bygones; we had better be friends."

"For nothing whatever!" reiterated A., hotly. "Do you call it nothing that you insulted my wife, and killed me, moreover, when I tried to vindicate her?"

"I suppose I must tell you the plain fact," replied his opponent. "I see you still labor under a delusion. The matter was simply this: I had been the lover of your wife, but broke with her. That was the insult. That is why she got you to challenge me. However, these are bygones; we'll be friends now."

Whether they were friends after that I cannot tell. I rather think that A. felt ready to hide himself.

Two friends — in fact they were cousins — sat together in pleasant intercourse. Said the one:

"To tell the truth, I was born to be a poet. I did write novels, and my first publications made quite a sensation."

"Don't I know that," says the cousin, "since it was I who wrote half the reviews about them? It was I, sweet coz, who brought you into fashion. That is easily managed, if one has a few connections and sufficient wit to let the review be racy; people are easily caught."

"What — you? Surely you are but joking! Why, I owe you everlasting thanks.'

"Thanks — no," replied the cousin. "Did we not love one another as very brothers?"

The would-be poet grew thoughtful, continuing after a while:

"But it was short-lived fame. I had jumped into fashion with one leap, as it were, and a great future seemed to await me, when, as by magic, there was a change which I never understood. Reviews from panegyrics turned to spite, cutting me up so mercilessly that no publisher presently had courage to launch my

works, and I was constrained to turn my back upon the literary career."

"Well, I can solve that mystery also. It was I who cut you up so mercilessly as you say, not leaving you the faintest pretence to talent. I had set myself to persecute you into silence; as soon as you opened your mouth, down came the lash. What could you do but turn your back upon literature?"

"You — you did that?"

"To be sure, but don't excite yourself: it was to your own advantage. Your mother, to whom I never could say nay, had implored me to leave no stone unturned in trying to save you from what she considered your utter ruin. You had no talent for poetry, she said, but a very marked calling for the blacking manufactory, on which your family had thriven conspicuously. Now *I* knew — of course I did — that your literary fame was all humbug; and humbug could not really hold you in the saddle, I saw that. A reviewer could fill your balloon, but he could not keep it sailing, and with every line you wrote the gas escaped woefully; you were as near a collapse as possible. So I generously resolved to anticipate it, and by main force bring you from poetry to blacking. I discharged broadsides of wit and volleys of sarcasm whenever you dared to show yourself in print, success crowning my efforts; for you died rich with the spoils of blacking — a man of worth, too, in the eyes of respectable citizens.'

"And went to hell!" cried the blacking and poesy-monger. "Should I find myself here if my Pegasus had not been hamstrung so vilely?"

"That is more than I know," returned the reviewing cousin mildly. "But I scarcely think that literature by itself would have carried you to Paradise, any

more than I believe that blacking alone had power to drag you to hell. But these are bygones. I loved you dearly, and was your best friend, after all."

The poetical blacking-dealer turned away disgusted. The information was more than he could stand.

A couple of monks were holding low but earnest converse.

"But tell me, brother," said the one, "how you came to take the cowl?'

"Through my own stupidity; it was nothing else. I fell in love with Lisella Neri; you knew her, I think. She was considered a beauty, and she was an heiress. However, I was refused, and, sick of life, I entered the monastery,— a piece of folly I rued every day till I died. A simple story, is it not? But what brought you to the cloister?"

"The very opposite, strange to say. I also loved Lisella, and presently was her accepted suitor, but it ended in my being the most miserable husband under the sun. Lisella was both capricious and bad; and she did not care for me. I never knew a moment's peace. There seemed but one way out of misery: leaving her mistress of her fortune, I fled to the monastery, and truly I never repented of it. If ever a moment's discontent assailed me I had but to think of Lisella and happiness was restored."

The first monk sat buried in silence. Presently he said: "Our experience shows that no one can escape his destiny. From what you tell me I gather that Lisella, one way or another, must have brought me to the cowl. Still you, brother, were the most fortunate after all; not because for a time you owned that handsome troubler of peace, but because, knowing her as I did not, your disappointment ended in content."

But enough of this. What is the use of telling these things?

Martin, poor Martin, what may have become of you? He was wronged after all. Badly brought up, badly used, he was my work.

She was very beautiful that young girl, about his own age. She was cleaning the house-steps one day when I first saw her. But lowly as her ocupation was, she charmed the eye. It was easy for me to offer to educate her. She appeared not born to her humble sphere. I placed her with a family I knew.

By what chance *he* and *she* met I know not, but their first meeting seems to have been sufficient. As in a flash of lightning love struck their hearts simultaneously, and quickly they knew they were each other's.

Martin came to me with an open confession. But not only did I refuse consent,— I cruelly taunted him. He quitted me in anger to seek his own way. As self-willed as myself, he hesitated not a moment as to his line of action, carrying off the girl before my very eyes so to speak.

She was nowhere to be found. But he did not hide, facing me boldly. It was then that I thrust him from my house; from my heart also I believed — but in this I was mistaken.

What could he have been wanting to tell me that would heal every breach between us, as he said in that letter? Did it concern him or her? A Higher Power has spoken, he said. I am left to maddening doubt.

Doubt?— nay, it is a burning question, consuming my soul with the fire of hell — sufficient almost to draw me back to earth as a wandering ghost. But should I find an answer to the question — and where?

LETTER VI.

LET me speak to you of Lily. But I fear memory will scarcely separate the child Lily from the woman into which she blossomed. Remember that I see her with the knowledge of a later period. I neither saw nor heard her aright.

She was a Creole. Delicate and lovely were her features, though not perhaps molded after any received type of beauty; her hair black and glossy; her eyes like stars, of so deep a blue that the cursory beholder believed them black, and veiled with lashes behind which her soul at times would appear to withdraw from your gaze as a pure nymph descending into her own limpid depth. Her figure was slight and airy, perfectly harmonious, not wanting in fullness, but tenderly shaped; not tall, with hands and feet of the smallest, and rarely beautiful. Such was Lily. But those eyes of hers were her greatest charm. Who does not know the soft enchantment of Creole eyes? Lily's even now have a power that penetrates my soul. Never in all eternity shall I forget that tender brightness sparkling with tearful laughter, that gaze half sad and yet so full of promise, that at any time it bound my heart.

The southern temperament is generally accredited with caprice and passionate self-will. But nothing was more unlike Lily than this. No doubt there was warmth in her nature, but its glow was gentle and deep, never kindling to passion, but always yielding its own beneficent radiance. Capriciousness was utterly foreign to her, but she knew her own mind concerning anything

she considered to be right — anything her conscience had recognized as due to truth or charity. In such things her will was unbendable, though in aught else she was submissiveness itself. Self-love she knew not, her soul's deepest need being surrender. Poor child, you could not have been placed more terribly, all but given over to one who was an egotist to the core of his being.

She was all heart. Later on some physician discovered what he called an organic defect — Lily's heart was too large, he said. Nothing more likely than this! I never knew a disposition so prone to feeling, so easily touched as hers. She was brimming with affection, love being the only reward she claimed. As a child, a loving word — a look even — could so move her that she would fling herself on your neck whispering her gratitude as she nestled in your embrace. Her sympathy at all times was easily roused. The trials and strivings of others — their joys and sorrows, their happiness or misfortune — were all that interested her most. She seemed to move in love and pity.

At times I could not but tell myself how ill-fitted she was for a self-seeking world. Her tender nature was often hurt in intercourse with others, and, feeling repulsed, she would shrink back within herself. That is why after all she was a lonely child, satisfied to commune with herself and with me — wretch as I was.

Added to this, hers was a wonderful simplicity of nature — simplicity of spirit I ought to say. I doubt not that, had she lived to extreme old age, she would never have departed from the heart of a child. Nothing was more easy than to talk her over to anything, provided only it did not clash with her sense of right. She never dreamt that anybody could be deceiving her.

Once or twice I frivolously put her simple-mindedness to the test, but felt so humbled by her utter trust that I never did it again. Incarnate shamelessness would have bowed to her holy innocence. She was one of those beautiful beings one meets with but rarely in life, who, walking on earth, keep their skirts pure, no matter what defilement be about them. I verily believe you might have dragged her through slums of sin and vice, and she would have come forth with innocence unharmed. Her soul somehow was above offense, she never thought that anybody could be wanting to do wrong. Her eyes never opened to the appalling fact that it is a wicked world in which men live. She knew what sin was, her pious mind having its own childlike ideas concerning it; but she never knew vice as, with fleeting footstep, she followed her transient course of life.

I should wrong myself if I said that I never saw this till now. I felt it even then, corrupt as I was. How little there was in common between us — she all spirit, I all flesh. Again I say, poor little Lily!

She did not acquire much knowledge in life, her learning being restricted to the fewest of objects. That history was her favorite pursuit would seem natural, since history treats of men, of their deeds and conflicts, their happiness and grief, moving her heart to sympathy; and she cared for a book only inasmuch as it spoke of her fellows, otherwise she saw but dead letters which wearied her. In mechanical attainments, therefore, she was ever backward; it was next to impossible to teach her the use of a foreign tongue. Living a life of feeling, she could not but become contemplative and somewhat dreamy, reason inclinging to sit apart in her. We seriously endeavored to shake her up, as the

phrase goes, but it is a thankless task to attempt anything against nature. Wanting in communicativeness she was by no means,— to me at least she was ready to confide her every thought.

The stories of the Bible had even been those she loved above all others. They had been the first food of her waking soul, and never anything impressed her more deeply than the death on the Cross of the Son of God, who loved sinful men and gave His life for them. That love and that suffering formed her earliest impressions, and the most lasting. Again and again she would read the holy record, and surely an angel has counted the tears she shed while so engaged. Unlike in aught else as she was to Mary Magdalene, she was like her in burning love for her crucified Lord.

Later on the history of the Crusades moved her. The Crucified One was her first love, and stories of the crusaders first stirred her enthusiasm, the idea seizing on her so powerfully that the course of a few weeks seemed to add years to her growth. The enthusiasm cooled, but the thought remained, and thenceforth the Holy Land, where the Son of God had lived and died, was the object of her dearest longing. She would at first lend expression to her feelings, but she suffered for it. Her little girl-friends nicknamed her the Lady Crusader. And even if they held their peace they could not refrain from teasing her by signs, holding up their fingers crosswise on meeting her; she, poor little thing, of course understood their amiable meaning. The Savior's Cross thus early had become her cross. The mockery hurt her deeply, and she was not again heard to speak of the Holy Land. But where the lips must be silent, the heart perhaps clings to its longing all the more ardently.

Would it not seem that she was little fitted for this world? — not for my world, at any rate. Had I not been such a hopelessly miserable fellow, I must have known it, her very look must have told me — beautiful and pure as an angel! Beauty and its enjoyment had ever appeared to me as the very prizes of life; but never have I known anything more simply beautiful than the entire devotion of this child-soul in purity and truth, and unspotted by self-love.

Some years passed away when my mother again thought fit to interfere. "That won't do," she said; "you anticipate future happiness, and thereby will lose it. You must separate. You had better travel for a couple of years. I will watch over Lily meanwhile, and do what I can towards bringing her up for your delight. Yes, leave us, my son; the time will come when you will see the wisdom of my counsel."

I could not but own that my mother was right, and declared myself ready to make the effort in the interest of future happiness, or, more correctly, of promised enjoyment. It had become desirable, just about that time, that one of the partners of the firm should go to South America; it would be a lengthened absence. My old uncle could not undertake it; my cousin, junior partner like myself, did not care for the journey; I, therefore, yielding to my mother's private representations, offered to go. Lily dissolved in tears on taking leave; my mother's severest influence scarcely could bring her to reason. I too was moved, but took comfort in selfish thought. "Wait, little woman; we shall meet again, and future delight will be greater than present loss!"

I stayed away longer even than was expected. I often had news from home — letters, too, from Lily —

wonderful letters! An angel might have written them, those delicately tender productions; and nothing could be more foreign to my own nature than the lovely thoughts expressed in those — shall I say — ethereal letters? But they did not sink into my heart: they only touched my senses.

I returned at last and saw her again. I was charmed, — no, that is not the word,— I was enchanted! Graceful and slender — unutterably lovely, with maiden blushes, and veiling her eyes — just quitting childhood; she was not quite fifteen.

But as I pronounced her name she raised those wondrous eyes and looked at me. Joy trembled in tears, and echoed through my soul. It was but a look, but I was satisfied. I clasped her to my heart.

Shall I call them happy, the days which now had dawned? They were happy, but not without a sting. Seeing Lily was as though reading her letters. Again and again I felt she was the child of another sphere. How should she satisfy me? Even while I clasped her in rapture I *knew* her aims and mine were far, far apart. As childlike as ever, hers was the same yielding tenderness; but her very affection filled me with regret. The love in which she moved was unknown to me; she and I were different as day and night, as heaven and hell.

Some time passed away. Again my mother stepped between us, reminding me of the calls of good sense and propriety. The child must be left free to develop; our constant intercourse would end in her treating me as a brother always, and that was not what I wanted. It was desirable that I should take bachelor's rooms, and the less I showed myself at home the better. For the rest I could make myself as agreeable to Lily as I pleased, and as might be compatible with the solemn

promise not to speak to her of love till she should have completed her seventeenth year.

My mother always had her way; I promised and took rooms. I saw she was right. Lily had not unfolded in my presence as she might have done. There was a change on my leaving, and a new relationship promised to grow out of the old one. She ceased being the mere child, her natural surrender clothing itself with maidenly reserve. I was obliged to be careful, and that was well. It was a time of trial, and continued so in spite of its own share of anticipating bliss. . . .

I remembered Annie and made inquiries. Her father had died; what had become of her no one could tell. My mother could have told I doubted not, but I dared not ask her. I tried to stifle recollection, and with Lily's unconscious assistance I succeeded. . . .

There was sorrow on the horizon. Lily drooped. She had always been delicate, and waking womanhood found her more delicate still. Our utmost care gathered round her, and we resolved to winter in the south. Lily had grown thoughtful; the child was trying to understand herself, dreamily musing within her soul. She seemed more lovely than ever, beset with the riddles of her deepest being. But delight in her yielded to anxiety.

Thus we three — my mother, Lily, and myself — moved southward. It was a time of blessing; this period of my life appearing steeped in light, and showing of darkness only what seemed needful to enhance the light. Lily's state of health grew less alarming; a year passed rapidly, I will not say without spot or blemish as far as it concerned myself, yet without leaving any real scar on the tablets of memory. It was all but Paradise — but now, now it is hell!

How happy we were, we three together! My mother amiability itself — I anxious to be amiable — and Lily lifting her fair white cup to receive heaven's dew. She was happy, and she showed it. How gracefully she raised her drooping head! how radiant were her looks, drinking in the riches of beauty about her! Not only bodily, but mentally, she unfolded charm upon charm in the genial atmosphere, half a year working a marvel of change. Womanhood had risen in the blushes of dawn, sweet and fragrant as a rose just opening her chalice to the dewy kisses of morning. In her relation to me also childhood receded; as tender and submissive as ever, there was an unconscious dignity about her. She was no longer the petted darling, living only in the affection that surrounded her; but she had found riches of life, fathomless and beautiful, within her own being. And before long she, whose natural gifts of mind and heart far surpassed my own, had gained an ascendancy over me as complete as indescribable. Gladly I yielded myself to this influence; it was a new delight — nobler and purer than any I had tasted before. Lily raised me above myself — I hardly knew it at the time; but new sensations, new interests, new hopes, filled my heart, teaching me gradually that there *were* better things in life than gratifying self and pleasing the senses. Day by day intercourse with her refined and ennobled my nature. I was in a fair way of becoming good, of becoming *human,* let me say!

Her own eyes had opened to the beauty of the world — other beauty than I had ever known, and by degrees I learned to see things with *her* eyes. But her look and longing continually soared beyond this world, which could not satisfy her deepest desire. And can you believe it, she drew me after her. What power, what influence in

so tender, so fragile a creature! It cost her no effort. I followed, followed, as though her soul were a beacon in darkness. I listened to her voice as to the guidance of a prophetess, directing my sight to a rapture of bliss. A new world,— a world of the spirit,— opened to my wondering gaze, a vision of life eternal dawning slowly beyond. I do remember them, those blissful hours lifting my soul from the dust. Ah, God in heaven, what hours, what recollections, and now — what despair.

Another spring was at hand, we were thinking of moving homewards. Lily had suffered lately from somewhat alarming symptoms — spasms of the heart, the doctor said. But we would not disquiet ourselves, hoping nothing serious would supervene. Lily within these eighteen months had blossomed to such fulness of life, her measure overflowing, as it were, with youth and beauty, and adding to our happiness daily. It had rendered us fearless. But a strange anxiety took hold of Lily, showing itself whenever we spoke of returning home. I tried to discover what moved her, and to my utter astonishment, it appeared that an unsatisfied longing filled her heart. That old desire of her childhood to see the Holy Land had suddenly possessed her afresh; or perhaps the thought, as a hidden spark, had lived within her all these years. She entreated me not to take her home before she had set foot on the sacred soil, be it for ever so short a time. She could never rest, she thought, till she had been there, and if I would but take her thither, she would bless me for it even in heaven.

I viewed her desire merely in the light of a childish fancy, even a foolish whim; yet in my secret heart I admired the faithful persistence with which evidently she had clung to that early love; it touched me, and I

resolved, as far as lay with me, that her wish should be gratified. Indeed, she might have asked for a far more foolish thing, and I could not have found it in me to deny her. When she begged for anything with that submissive angel look of hers, who *could* have resisted!

I consulted my mother; she demurred but eventually agreed. We had spent those early spring days cruising about the Ionian Isles, and before long our faces were set to the east. Lily thanked me with a look, a sweet loving look, which remained deathless in my heart — yea, and it will burn there with a pain unquenchable throughout the ages of hell. But from that hour a heavenly peace had settled on her. Silence had fallen upon her, but she was perfectly happy.

A few words more and my story will be ended. Why should I add to my grief by speaking about it? But retrospect is not the least of hell's torments.

We touched at the coast of Palestine and disembarked. As a queen I led her to the land of her desire, myself being the first of her servants. But her thoughts were not of queenship; to her own mind she was but a humble pilgrim. Slowly we proceeded from one sacred spot to another. Lily's illness was more serious than we guessed, but she would not hear of rest. She was suffering from heart-disease which had rapidly developed. The end was as sudden as unlooked for. At Bethlehem, in a convent which received us for charity's sake, she breathed her last, a few days before she had completed her seventeenth year. She died with the satisfied smile of a saint on her face, for her desire had been given her.

Death with her had lost its terror. As one glorified she lay — pale, but in heavenly beauty; her hands folded

on her virgin bosom where the world had not entered.

Perhaps you will scarcely believe my words, that even in those last hours, and though I sickened with the sense of certain loss, she had power to lift me high above perishable grief. A fearful trust had come to me that, no matter what affliction remained on earth, the place was prepared where I might be united with her, where there is no more sorrow and no more pain, where death has passed away.

Terrible delusion!

Her last words fell on my heart as a blessing from the upper world:

"Thanks, Philip! I am happy — God be with you!" . . .

I was stricken with grief. But my inmost soul was buoyed with the hope that soon I, too, might rise beyond the reach of sorrow. In a holy kiss her last breath had mingled with mine.

But scarcely was she gone when the old self-willed nature within me rose. Goaded to despair I was wild with the knowledge of bereavement — what a treasure I had lost, both of beauty and affection. And how near I had been to dreams realized — but a few days and she would have been mine! This then was the reward of years of patience and self-denial! In her I had saved up treasures — pleasures untold, to lose it all by a single blow! . . . And yet was it not meet it should be so? Should I not rejoice that she was spared the sad future that awaited her on earth? I could not rejoice then, Lily, but I think I could now — if I were not in hell!

My mother too was grieved, but she did not lose her composure; she sorrowed more for me, I think, than for the loss of her we had loved. We buried

Lily in the Holy Land. She sleeps beneath a sycamore, not far from the spot where the Savior of men was born.

We turned homeward. On our journey back I found Martin.

Thus I became the man I was. I gave myself up to the world, and lived only for its pleasures. I loved no one but myself, excepting, perhaps, my mother and the boy I had adopted. I say *perhaps,* for that I really loved them I cannot now be sure. I conformed to outward Christianity, but my heart was far from it. True, I joined not the sinners who openly sit in the seat of the scornful, laughing at all things sacred; but after Lily's death there was in reality nothing left I counted sacred, unless it be an occasional recollection of my own childhood left far, far behind. For at times I did remember those early days at Aunt Betty's knee, but I closed my heart, driving these thoughts away from it.

Life dealt gently with my mother. She preserved her charms, and continued the perfect lady, admired by all. She had always been pious, but she took to being saintly now, trying hard to show me the way of life. However, she could not bring me further than that, for her sake, I paid proper attention to Christian observances, and, for my own sake, to common decency in the pursuit of pleasure.

Let me stop here and rest from the pain of confession. Do not imagine that confessing with us is followed by relief. I am in hell, where there is no more repentance, no more sorrow for sin.

LETTER VII.

LIGHT increases slowly, but we never reach further than a kind of luminous twilight — the reflection of Paradise. Time passes amid suffering, torture, and regret. Do not imagine that because I can write what perchance interests you, it follows that it interests me, or that I can fill up my time. That, too, is but imaginary; time seems to pass, but alleviation there is none. Upon earth the worst misery yields to the consolation that, sooner or later, it must come to an end. But here — awful fact — time itself is endless!

Memories! memories! Facts long since forgotten, here they are, as though they had happened but yesterday. I try to escape them, and once more recollections of Aunt Betty are something of an anodyne. In thinking of her, and her invariable kindness to me throughout the years of my childhood, I long for tears of gratitude. But the eye is dry as a parched desert. How good she was to me, but kindest of all to my father! And how loving to all whom she could serve. The humblest was not beneath her, if she could lend him a helping hand. How often would she sit up for my mother, sending the tired maid to bed. How often would she spend an evening with the servant girls, showing them how to make their own clothes, and teaching them the art of laying by something out of their wages. She would read to them, and amuse them to keep them steady, and was actually going to teach the coachman his letters. But there my father interfered, introducing him to a night-school instead.

Her health was anything but strong, yet she never considered herself when the burdens of others could be lightened. If ever anything made her angry, it was the request to take care of herself. "*I?*" she would say, as if the most monstrous demand had been proffered, "*I?*"— what do you mean!" She had put self so far away that the idea of caring for it appeared to her almost ludicrous. Love gave her a wondrous power of self-command. When my mother had hurt her feelings — no rare occurrence I fear — and she had brushed away the tears, she never failed doing a special turn of sisterly service with a face of angelic devotion; anxious to appear all the more light-hearted in my father's presence, if perchance he had noticed it, and looked distressed. Of course her own loving and hopeful disposition assisted her in ever making the best of things; but more than this, it was the divine spirit moving in her. Love had become second nature to her. And love always helped her in doing the right thing, however strangely she might set about it. Her education had been neglected, even as regards religious knowledge. If you had asked her the simplest questions *about* faith and hope and charity she would probably have startled you with ignorant answers; but she *had* these things, and they made her a child of heaven.

The room she had chosen for herself was simple, but her own neatness pervaded it. Yet one could not say there was any order in her room. Every available space was littered with objects great and small in wonderful variety, offering to the observant mind a key to my aunt's inmost nature; for amid valuables of every description there were articles only fit for the dust-bin apparently. But my aunt knew why she valued them. They were a sort of landmarks, in her estimation, by

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which her life's history could be traced. Even at an early age I had a vague notion of the sanctity of these relics, and must own I handled them reverently. They would set my fancy going, and I would invent stories where auntie's authentic knowledge appeared loth to lift the veil.

Aunt Betty, as a rule, dressed more than simply, despising all pretence at fashion in her daily life. Not that she "could not an' she would," as she used to say. And she valued a handsome present now and then, not for the sake of the object itself, but as a mark of people's regard for her. She liked to be thus honored by those, for whom she spent herself in service! Both my father and my mother lost no opportunity of presenting her with costly gifts, articles of dress especially, if my mother was the giver. Aunt Betty would accept these things with almost childish satisfaction, shutting them up forthwith in her spacious wardrobe. And thus it came about that she owned quite an array of millinery, shawls, mantles, bonnets, laces, furs and what not, without ever wearing them. That they grew old-fashioned did not trouble her in the least; but that the moth should not eat them was her conscientious care. For this reason she would hold regular exhibitions, when bed, table, and chairs were loaded with her treasures by way of giving them an airing; she walking about with a quiet expression of ownership, her gentle hands smoothing out or dusting her finery. But her eyes seemed far away. Or, if a gay mood supervened, she would even place a feathered bonnet on her dear old head, looking at herself in the glass with a peculiar smile, as though she were comparing the once maiden Betty, whose youth and beauty brought homage to her feet, with the aging spinster whom the world scarcely knew now, whose life

had run in the narrow channel of sacrifice. "I am an old goose," she would say, putting up her gear with her lavender bags.

But auntie, besides these things, owned a small library of choice works, beautifully bound. She would dust them as lovingly as those unused garments. But she never read them, having neither time nor quiet, she said. "Some day when I am old, and no longer needed, I will read them all," she would add. Among her many peculiarities her habit of reading aloud deserves notice. Understanding in her case, presupposed hearing, which proves that the art of reading with her never reached beyond the rudimentary stage. Poor Aunt Betty, keeping your books for a time when you are no longer needed! But that time found you singing psalms with the angels.

In the dusk of the evening I would often seek her room. I would find her sitting in silence and lost in thought. But she was never annoyed at my disturbing her — she loved me too much for that. And then she would begin telling me stories, quite a special gift with her. I doubt not but that she mostly made up her stories as she told them. What if they were no great literary productions, they breathed a poetry of their own — a warmth and loving-kindness that fascinated my childish heart. It was Aunt Betty who first instructed me in religion. If her teaching was not exactly dogmatic, it was most truly practical. The impressions it left — so deep, so sweet, so tender — how could they ever fade away!

One evening we were sitting by her window. The sky was clear and the stars were shining with unusual brightness. The wondrous sight impressed my childish mind. No doubt I had noticed them before; but look-

ing back to that hour, it seems as though on that evening I first beheld the sparkling lights of heaven. I wanted to know what the stars were, and what was behind them. Then Aunt Betty spoke to me of the dwelling-place of our Heavenly Father and its many mansions of indescribable beauty. I would go there some day on leaving the earth, if I were a good and holy child.

The prospect pleased me, but curiosity was not satisfied. I wanted to know more — I wanted a direct answer to my question. Now, many an instructor of youth might have been puzzled, but Aunt Betty's imagination was far too fertile to be so easily at fault. She continued therefore: "Behind the stars, my child there is a grand beautiful hall of glory such as eye has not seen, and there God sits upon His throne with the only-begotten Son at His right hand. Right in the middle of the hall there is a Christmas tree, higher than the highest mountain on earth, full of lights and most beautiful presents. And who do you think are gathered beneath that tree? — why, all the good children who, having lived holy lives, have come to be children of God and blessed angels. There they are, always happy, always good. They rejoice at the tree which is prepared for them, and praise God with new songs, their voices ringing sweetly through the spaces of heaven. The presents on the tree are all theirs — I mean they are always being given to them — yet the tree is never empty."

I thought this delightful. "But what are the stars?" I said, reverting to my question.

"The stars, child? — well, I will tell you," said auntie. "Right round that hall there are innumerable little peep-holes through which the light of the Christ-

mas tree shines upon earth. We call them stars. Whenever the little angel-children have done singing, they go and look through these peep-holes, anxious to know whether boys and girls on earth are trying to be good, and likely to join them some day; for they consider them their little brothers and sisters, and wish them to become as happy as they are. Whenever you see the stars therefore, you must remember that through each one of them the eye of some angel looks down upon you. That is why the stars twinkle; just as these big eyes of yours twinkle as you look at me. Now you see that you must always try to be good and obedient, else some angels would fill with tears; and you would not like them to be sad while watching you."

This account so moved me that tears rose to my own eyes, and I lay sobbing in Aunt Betty's lap. It was the desire of knowing more which first tended to quiet me:

"But, auntie," I said, "tell me what happens to all the bad children?"

This question very nearly puzzled her. She was too tender-hearted to speak to me of hell and its terrors, so she said: "The bad children — well, I think they are put into some dark corner — far, far away from God and His dear Son."

Again I was not satisfied; there must be more.

"Well," she continued, — "listen. The bad children are shut up in an ugly room, where the fire has gone out, and where it is so cold and miserable that they chatter with their teeth. It is dark too, for the light has been taken away, and they tremble with fear. They cry and knock at the door as hard as they can, but no one pays any attention."

I thought that dreadful. "I am frightened, auntie," I whispered, pressing quite close to her.

"Look up at the stars, my child," she said; "then you won't be frightened." And she stroked my hair lovingly.

Fear left me. The stars did twinkle as though they said, "Be good, little child;" and I felt quite ready to be good.

"I should like to hear them sing," I went on presently. "Do you know, auntie, how angels sing?"

"I will try and show you," she responded, falling in at once with my desire. And with her sweet voice she sang to me one of her favorite hymns. How beautiful it sounded in the evening twilight. There was nothing grand about her voice, but something so childlike in its gentle tones that the song sank into my heart as I kept watching the stars; and they seemed to look down upon me as kind as auntie herself, twinkling again and again, "Be good!" Another moment, and my hearing was charmed, following my gaze. Earth was not, but only heaven, and auntie's hymn was the new song of angels. I listened with a rapt devotion that swelled my childish soul, folding my hands unconsciously as Aunt Betty had taught me; and I tried to twinkle back at the stars with my own eyes to let them see that with my ears, with my heart, I was listening to their angels.

When the singing ceased and silence had carried me back to the present, I felt quite poor and forsaken. But all that night in dreams I saw the heavenly tree, and heard the songs of glory.

Many an evening we spent like that, Aunt Betty singing, and I watching the stars. And before long I had learned her hymns and we sang them together. I believe it was with auntie as with myself: singing our hymns to the praise of God, we both felt carried away

from earth, both longing for that which is behind the stars.

One evening Aunt Betty told me the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. It greatly affected me. I was very glad for the poor beggar to have been carried right into Abraham's bosom, where he was so happy; but the rich man longing in the torment of hell for a little drop of water moved my deepest pity. I grieved for him, shedding an agony of tears. Poor rich man, how hard it was to punish him so dreadfully! Auntie was quite unhappy at my distress. No doubt she meant to impress me, but not in this way, and she tried her utmost to calm my feelings.

"Don't take it to heart so much, child," she said. "I do not think you need. And it was very unkind of Father Abraham to deny him a poor drop of water. God, I dare say, did not like that at all; indeed, if I know Him aright, I should not be surprised if Father Abraham had a scolding for it. For if a drop of water could comfort the rich man in his torment, I don't believe God would have refused it. And He who freely gave His precious blood would not be so unkind about mere water. And, moreover, didn't you hear that the rich man even in hell remembered his brethren? That, I am quite certain, pleased God very much indeed. Love to the brethren cannot but move the heart of God, even if it comes right from the midst of hell."

Thus she comforted me. She would not have hesitated to say a great deal more than this to still my grief. Poor Aunt Betty! — I said she could not dogmatize: the one creed she was sure of was God's wonderful love; and judging that love by her own loving heart, she believed it fully capable of flooding all creation with its own indwelling goodness. But why do I call her

poor? It is I who am poor — all the poorer for memories! I will not call them painful memories, though I ache with them. Do you understand me? Even in hell something precious is bound up with such memories, though on the other hand it cannot but add to grief — just as a certain sweetness in some viands brings out the fact that they are sour. I speak of childhood's memories: those of later years, save those connected with Lily, are all sorrow — all despair; I would gladly forget them, but it is part of my punishment that I cannot.

Thus I distinctly remember the religious instruction which was to prepare me for confirmation. I was deeply moved, and hardly know how such impressions should pass so quickly, so entirely, as though they had not been. The clergyman in question was as godly as venerable; the animal nature was strong in me even then, but he knew how to keep it under. It needed but a look of his eye, and I felt a prisoner to the divine, listening anxiously to his teaching. He had a rare gift of touching the heart and drawing it out. He spoke to us on the words: "Be ye reconciled to God!" How could I ever forget those words? Alas, I did forget them, but now they pierce the soul; they keep ringing in the brain: " Be reconciled — be reconciled to God! " And when once their memory is upon me, nothing will drive it out, till some other recollection, some other pain, takes their place.

I remember all he said on that occasion,— I remember it now from beginning to end,— but I could not repeat it, there being a great gulf between now and the time of those words. Nor can the recollection of them do me any good; they are barren of comfort, of instruction — barren entirely of peace. It is only my mind which takes them in now; the heart is closed. It is as

though the words were hollow; or perhaps I am hollow and empty, and there is nothing left that can fill me. I do remember that he spoke to us of God's own word, whereby salvation was offered to men, but all that is outside of me only. I am like the rich man thirsting for a drop of water, but there is no one to give it. I make painful efforts to drink in, as it were, any of the words I think of; they are there; I once knew them by heart, but I cannot lay hold of them. They seem quite close at times, but when I would take them to myself, they are gone. This terribly hopeless effort is perhaps the worst of hell's torments.

You may understand from this how it is possible with me to speak of things pertaining to the kingdom of God — naming the Saviour, the Crucified One, speaking of repentance and faith — without the faintest share in their blessing; nay, mentioning them with my lips merely, despair filling the heart. Everything is vain and empty in hell: those words are but soulless sounds to me; I know them outwardly, I can speak of them, but their meaning is nothing to me. I know that there is a Saviour, and that He is the Son of God, but Him I know not; it is empty knowledge; His very name even is gone. I hate myself, and say I have deserved it all; but it is fruitless repentance — repentance without cleansing tears. And as for faith, of course I believe — must believe; but that too is empty — not faith which clings to that which it believes. Do not the devils believe — they must — and tremble? "Be reconciled to God!" What power these words had to move me! I felt in that hour as though it must be man's one and only object on earth to seek reconciliation with God, and, having found it, to go to Him through the portal of death. I remembered the stars

and their loving message, "Be good!" and I felt ready to turn my back upon the world once for all. My first communion was as an earnest that I had set my feet upon the path to heaven, but I quickly turned aside; at the very church door the world lay waiting with its pleasant road to hell.

"Be reconciled to God!" — the words keep sounding about me, not as an echo from heaven, but rather as a curse of hell. "Be reconciled — reconciled to God!" Why must I hear it when there is no more reconciliation — when the door of mercy is closed. O terrible retribution!

If at times I know not what to do with myself, I show myself in the Row, for of course that too is here — Hyde Park, Champs Elysées, Prater, Unter den Linden, Corso, Prado, all in one. And upon my word I do not think there is much difference between these fashionable resorts upon earth and their semblance here — I mean so far as what the world pleases to call style is concerned; we could scarcely outdo the world in that respect; but we have far more variety. For with you but one fashion can prevail at a time, whereas here all fashions flourish, all the nonsense of centuries combined. Just think of that — all the inventions of *la mode* brought together, say of a thousand years! Could there be a more absurd picture, taking the fashion of dress for instance? Whatever gloom or wretchedness be upon me, I assure you I laugh right out at the sight — folly convicted out of its own mouth as it were. Just stop for a moment and imagine the effect — women covered to the neck with flounces and furbelows on the one hand, or half naked on the other; puffed out to deformity here, tight as pump-handles

there. Bonnets like coal-scuttles here, bonnets like cheese-plates there! But who could name all their nonsense of farthingales and stomachers, ruffles and laces, crinolines and high-art-styles, fancy costumes and divided skirts? not to mention chignons like very towers of Babel, and simpleton fringes, and what not. Imagine them, I say, the fools of ten years only brought together, and try to think of the fools of ten centuries! And then to believe any one fashion beautiful, any one of them dictated by the "good taste" to which they all pretend. In the world somehow they pass for beautiful, perhaps because only one at a time can rule; but since every fashion which has had its day straightway goes to hell, and since there is no past here but a continuous present, they all flourish together, and a nice medley it is! One feels ashamed of humanity at the absurd sight. And what is more, fashionable people here are thoroughly ashamed of themselves, though they try hard to appear very proud of their clothes. It is a show of vanity, and we are horribly conscious of it — I say we, since I am sure I am no better than the rest. We know what sorry fools we are, but nevertheless we are very anxious to dress ourselves, choosing the fashion we followed in the world. And the worst is, our clothes do not even clothe us, as I told you already; we all see through each other's attire, no matter how stylish it is. True, that painful sense of nakedness is common to all here; still to be naked is one thing, and to go about naked, pretending at the same time to be fashionably dressed, is another; and it is very hard to be laughed at, knowing all the while how heartily one deserves it.

Would all the votaries of fashion, men and women on earth, could view — were it for a moment only — its

true appearance as seen in hell, and they would never desire to be fashionable again!

It is strange — no, not strange, but sadly true — that most people believe vanity and the love of dress no great sin, but, at worst, only one of those amiable foibles to which one may plead guilty quite innocently.

Love of dress in itself perhaps need not become a sin — I say *perhaps;* but look at it as you please, there is that connected with it which cannot but tend to the soul's ruin. Its aims and the aims of the spirit lie widely apart; it takes the place of better things, and vanity, clinging to you as a cloud, will hide the true objects of life. Men or women ruled by vanity fritter away their time, and when they die not only good works do not follow them, but opportunities wasted stand round their bier. Who has the face now to say that vanity, that love of dress, is harmless?

I look upon my own life. How plainly I see it all now,— how gladly would I improve opportunities, could they but return!

LETTER VIII.

It may surprise you to hear me speak of books in hell, but you will soon perceive the fitness of things, it being neither more nor less than this: whatever is bad must come to hell, so of printed matter whatever is morally evil or arrogantly stupid tends hitherwards, the books arriving first, the authors following, and their publishers along with them. You will understand then that we are well off for literature, of a certain description, that is to say.

Polite literature for instance has provided us with countless novels, very popular, if trashy and sometimes immodest. There is no civilized nation or country that has not produced its share, varying in quantity or quality. They seem represented by two species chiefly — one can hardly call them schools — the purely sensational and the sensationally impure; the former being content to hint where the latter touch boldly, the former often supremely worthless, where the latter are wickedly ingenious. Many authors, and especially some authoresses, appear to find their life's duty in pandering to depraved taste, or worse, in fostering it. I might mention names, but I refrain. Only let me assure these experts of the pen, ladies and gentlemen, that they are well known here. No doubt it will create quite a flutter in their bosoms, adding not a little to their sense of fame, to learn that their talent is so extensively appreciated, and that their books are fashionable, not only in polite society on earth, but even in hell! There is this drawback, to be sure, to damp

their spirits, that for the present they must be satisfied with mere honor — pay being withheld till they themselves join their circle of readers here. Then their reward shall be given them in this matter also.

This branch of the so-called *belles-lettres,* trashy novels, is greatly in vogue upon earth; it is not the good books which chiefly enrich the publishers, or authors either. There are people whose intellectual food consists in nothing but the former; but the soul lives not that could testify to mental or spiritual growth by their aid. If the use of such books is null on earth, what must it be here, where not even the miserable object remains of whiling away the time?

But to proceed: there is no lack here even of theological writings — especially of modern commentaries, but also of the dogmatic and homiletical kind. To speak plainly, how many a book or fine sermons or of religious comfort arrives here, preceding the hireling shepherds! With casuistry too we are thoroughly provided. The Middle Ages are represented chiefly by a vast amount of priestly falsehood, systematized into all sorts of fanatical quibbles and sacerdotal inventions concerning the deep questions of religion. The more modern school may be said to have reached a climax in the days of Voltaire and the encyclopedists, taking a fresh start with Kant and his followers. You observe I speak broadly, in a European sense, refraining from particularizing or quoting nearer home. You may judge for yourself, and be sure that no literary means are wanting here to advance the interests of atheism. For, mind you, even in hell those who "believe and tremble" may be brought to a worse state. For the rest, since I never troubled myself about theology, either

as a science or otherwise, I am not likely to study it here.

Besides this so-called true theology, there are found with us the writings of those puffed-up, half-crazy fanatics,— the false prophets of every degree, who make a sort of trade of religion. Their literary effusions are generally laughed at, even here; but in most cases the author himself arrives before long, and laughter for him turns to weeping. These curious divines have a special corner assigned to them in this place, differing greatly from the paradise they believed themselves heirs of in virtue of their singular calling.

Philosophy too is well represented. Philosophers on the whole are a harmless tribe. Some of them may be groping for wisdom which includes goodness and piety, and others are merely the victims of some peculiar mania which hurts no one. We get the writings of those only whom conceit of intellect drives to the front. I might quote some curious instances, showing how, within a professor's den, some ten feet square, the universe may be grasped, the mystery of life solved, eternity gauged; in fact, how the ocean of the infinite may be got into the nutshell of a finite brain.

In passing merely I mention the literature of the law. If I ignored it altogether it might be taken for disrespect, and I am sure I would rather not offend the gentlemen of the robe. Let me state the plain fact: I reverence justice, but I feel doubtful about lawyers. Did not some sharp-witted urchin make the discovery that the devil was a "lawyer" from the beginning. I would rather wash my hands of them, not understanding them in the least.

Last, but not least, I turn to the literary geniuses of the reviewing department, at the risk even of most

dreadfully offending them. No reviewer, I presume, would flatter himself with the conceit that his dissertations could have any but the most ephemeral value; I feel loth to disabuse their laudable modesty, but I am bound to let them know that some do live — live in hell! I have made the startling discovery that of reviews not a few appear to be written in ignorance, or inspired by envy and even downright malice. Reviewers form a species apart, not nurtured in babyhood, it would seem, with the milk of human kindness. I was assured once that in order to review a book properly, one had need to be something of a misanthrope — something of a cynic at any rate, since barking and biting seems to be the great delight. Be this as it may, I have always maintained that reviewers, as a natural curiosity, may be divided into two classes — those who are capable of passing judgment, and those who are not. The former, strange to say, cautiously, and indeed rarely, advance their criticism, and nothing of theirs is ever seen here.

The latter may be subdivided into professionals and amateurs. The first of these who trade, as it were, in the reviewing line, will have to plead guilty in most cases that they started originally with an aspiration of book-writing, but did not succeed. They have never got over their disappointment.

The second subdivision consists chiefly — would you believe it? — of a set of precocious youths, as clever as they are conceited, requiring an outlet for their exuberance. I have known them of the age of twenty, and even less, feeling grown-up all of a sudden by means of their first review: if their criticism was somewhat green, there was audacity to cover it. They don't mean any special harm, but they do feel themselves seated on

a throne, duly hidden of course, and snubbing authors — their grandfathers in age and experience.

By dint of numerous reviews, then, we are kept *au courant* with the events of the book-market. Whenever a specially mordant piece of criticism arrives here we know that it has been called forth by a publication which is probably good and certainly harmless. It is the caricature only which reaches us; but it is so, alas, with most things!

As for newspapers? — it stands to reason that much of the daily food provided in these quarters cannot fare any better, since ambition of gain, private or public, unblushingly presides at the board. How many a journal has but the one object in view — the making of money? How many others have actually sold themselves to further the paltry interests of this or that party, not caring in the least, in their hardened consciences, how far astray they lead the public mind?

And what shall I say of the appalling amount of despatches, notes, and official memoranda interchanged between the various Cabinets for no other reason, it would seem, but that of misleading? — specimens of ambiguous phraseology, ever appealing to truth and justice, but heeding neither truth nor justice wherever a chance of gain or even the interests of vulgar passion come to the front. This sort of political documents are rarely got hold of by newspapers even; on earth they are of the things that walk in secret, but they fail not to furnish us down here with many a curious explanation of historic events. I have come to suspect that nothing is more outrageously false, and cruel, and opposed to every will of God, than what goes by the name of higher politics.

You see from this sketch that we are not at a loss

for reading, but you will also perceive that the vile productions reaching us can nowise tend to edify or even really instruct us. If they enable us to follow events in the world, it is by a kind of inverted effect, suggesting in fact the very opposite of what they assert. There is here no pleasure in reading; on the contrary, the more one peruses, the more one sickens; but nauseated though we feel, we are unable to get out of the intellectual slough, the mire of a lying literature.

I never imagined while living on earth that I had need to render thanks for anything; that health, riches, happy days, were gifts to be grateful for, but rather accepted them as the natural appurtenances of my existence; and if I thought about them at all, it was only to wish for more, for I was never satisfied with life as I found it, nor with the world I lived in. Now I view things differently; I see now that the gifts of life are blessings unspeakable, and all the greater for being entirely undeserved. On looking back — and I am ever looking back now, there being nothing before me save one thing, awful and horrible, the judgment to come — on looking back, I say, I am bound to confess that the blessings of a single day of life on earth are innumerable as the stars. How rich is life! There may be misery and trouble on earth — and I believed I had my full share of both — but it has all dwindled to nothing since I have come to know the wretchedness of hell. Let me assure you out of my own dire experience that the most suffering creature on earth has much to be thankful for. Man's life, whatever it be, should bring him to his knees daily. And if you have nothing left of earth's blessings but air and light, and a piece of bread to satisfy your hunger, you have need to give thanks. I see it now, but for me it is too late. In

hell there is nothing — absolutely nothing to be thankful for; you, however whose sun has not yet set, may still learn to yield your hearts in gratitude. Ah, hear me, I beseech you; there is no help for me, but help may come to you!

I have told you, my friend, how continuously I am the prey of memories, but how much so — to what extent, I mean — you little guess. That deeds of iniquity and particular sins should assail me, tormenting the soul as with fire, is natural. But this is not all. There are other things, counted for little in the world, which cling to conscience with a terrible vividness. Every little falsehood and unjust dealing, every word of deceit and breach of fealty, every evil example and want of kindness,— they are all, all present now, piercing the heart as with daggers of regret. I thought so little of these things in life, that I scarcely stopped to consider them; they seemed buried on the spot, every year adding its own share to the mouldering heap. They have risen now and stand about me, I see them and I tremble.

I was just thinking of an example, out of hundreds which press round me. I take one at random. I have felt haunted lately by the sorrowful eyes of a poor little street boy. Wherever I turn I see him, or rather not so much him as his tearful troubled gaze, rising in judgment against me. It has all come back to my mind how one evening I sauntered about in the park, a poor little beggar running alongside, pressing me to buy a halfpenny worth of matches. I did not want them, and told him so, but he persisted in crying, "Only a ha'penny, sir — only a ha'penny." He annoyed me, and, taking him by the arm, I rudely pushed him away. I did not mean to hurt him, although, to tell

the truth, there was not a particle of kindness in me at the time. Nor lay the wrong in not buying his matches; I was quite at liberty to refuse, had I denied him kindly. But he annoyed me and I was angry. The child, flung aside roughly, fell to the road; I heard a cry; perhaps he had hurt himself — perhaps it was only grief for his matches lying about in the mud. I turned and met a look from his eyes, full of trouble and silent accusation. It would have been so easy for me to make good my thoughtlessness, so little would have comforted the child, but I walked away heedless of his grief.

Now few people would call that downright wickedness — few people in the world I mean; but here, unfortunately we are forced to judge differently. Years and years have passed since, for I was a young man at the time, but the memory of that child has returned upon me, his look of sorrowful reproof adding to the pangs of hell. It is but an example, as I said, and there are many — many!

But not mere deeds — every word of evil carelessly spoken in the days of earthly life comes back to me with similar force. As poisoned arrows such words once quitted my lips: as poisoned arrows they come back to me, piercing the heart. Oh consider it while living voice is yours, and speak not lightly! There is no saying what harvest of sin may spring from a single word. And if pity for others will not restrain you, be advised by pity for your own selves, since requital will come to yourselves only in the end.

And not merely deeds and words, but every harmful thought recurs to me, to gnaw away at my heart. There is a saying with certain philosophers in the world that nothing ever is lost. If this be true in the material

world, how much more so is it in spiritual things — ah, terrible truth!

And further, apart from the evil done, it is the good left undone, the opportunities wasted, which stand around me with pitiless scourge, and their name is legion! Thus everything, you see, both what I have done and left undone, comes to life here in this place of woe,—takes shape, I ought to say,— rising in accusation against me. I try to escape, but they are about me everywhere, those shapes of terror, enough to people a world with despair; they persecute me, they torture me, and I am their helpless prey. Memories of the good left undone — alas, they are far more bitter than those of the evil done! For temptation to do wrong often was great, and in my own strength I failed to conquer; but to do good for the most part would have cost little, if any, effort. I see it now with the new insight into life which hell gives. The man lives not who is excused from leaving good undone; however poor and humbly situated he may be, opportunity is ever at his door. It is for him only to open his heart and take in the opportunity; for his own heart is a well of power and of blessing to boot. He who is the fountain of love and purity, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh, has wondrously arranged it, that in this respect there is but little difference between the rich and the poor, the gentle and the simple. Let me conjure you then, brothers and sisters, listen to the voice of your heart while yet it is day! Listen, I say, and obey, lest the bitterness of repentance overtake you with the night, when no man can work! Ah, let no opportunity for the doing of good escape you, for it will rise against you when nothing is left but to wail in anguish.

I do not address these words to those who have grown pitiless as flint — none but God could touch them; but there are well-disposed hearts, which a ray of light may help to expand. I was not hard-hearted while I lived in the world; on the contrary, I could for the most part easily be moved to charity, if some one took the trouble to remind me. What ruined me was that boundless love of self which prevented my seeing the wants of others; or if I did see them, I did not stop to consider them. I receive now the reward of my deeds. Would that this fearful experience of mine could work a change in *you;* that might somewhat assuage my deepest sufferings! But even in that much of mercy I cannot believe; the soul in torment can doubt only — doubt eternally.

I cannot but give you another example. I remember a poor family living in a miserable cottage not far from the lordly dwelling I inhabited. As often as I passed that way I looked through the lowly window, for a bald head moving to and fro in measured intervals attracted my notice. It was long, however, before I saw the face. The father of a numerous family would sit there in ill-health, gaining a humble livelihood. It appeared to be not necessity alone, but delight in his work also, which kept him up. He was a wood-carver of no mean capacity, and worked for a wholesale house of children's playthings in the city. Strange to say, he was particularly clever in producing all sorts of ravenous beasts — he, who looked a personification of meekest mildness. Lions, wolves, and tigers graced his window-sill, he bearing trouble as a patient lamb. I said he was sickly, and the family was large. The wife took in washing; and they helped one another, each trying to ease the other's load.

But misfortune overtook them; the wholesale business failed; the poor man lost his livelihood. The bald head no longer appeared by the window — The cottage looked a grave. What had become of him? I once asked myself the question and stopped there, for you know self scarcely left me time to trouble myself with other people's affairs.

Still, opportunity thrust itself in my way. I saw him again — not merely his bald head, but himself. The poor man, bowed down with ill-health, and unused to hard labor, stood working in a brickfield with trembling knees.

I could not but pity him. I knew he was working himself to death, trying to gain food for his little ones. Indeed, he was in as imminent danger of life as if all the lions, wolves, and tigers whose images he had carved had gathered round to destroy him. I witnessed a touching scene one day. Passing about noon I saw the wife there, who had come with her husband's dinner — a dinner I would not have looked at. I saw how tenderly she wiped the weary forehead, how the children — for they all had come — clung to the father, the youngest climbing his knees, and how grateful he was for their affection, which roused him to new endeavors to gain a miserable pittance.

The sight really moved me; and I walked away, thinking I ought to do something for the struggling family. It was easy for me to find some post for the man which, while requiring no hard work at his hands, would keep them all in comfort. I certainly would see to it, but was called away on business; other things occupied my mind, and I forgot all about it. I did remember it again after a while, but then it was too late. The man had succumbed — the family was ruined.

But there are worse furies than these persecuting souls in torment. I cannot tell whether it is by imagination only, assisting what, for want of a better word, I must call the jugglery of hell, or whether this place of damnation has its own actual second sight, but it is a fact that sometimes I can see the entire growth of evil, spreading over years perhaps, and involving soul after soul, originating in some careless word of mine which proved to be the seed. I turn away; but I am driven to look again and again at the terrible consequences, and words cannot express what I feel.

It is appalling to think of the endless chain of sin and misery to which a single act, ay, a word even, may give rise. A chain, I say, for it is a frightful truth that the evil effect does not always spring from the seed as a single stupendous birth, to live and die for itself; but there is a demon power inherent in it of begetting and conceiving, wrong bringing forth wrong in endless succession. It is by its consequences, its capability of engulfing others, that the worst potency of sin becomes apparent.

It is of direct evil example, too, I would speak; how fearful is its power — how far-reaching its influence! Whatever wickedness a man may commit in the world, what is it as compared with the wrong he may be guilty of by his example? Then sin is as a mountain torrent, bursting its banks and carrying the unwary headlong to destruction. You may be dead yourself, yet your sin may live, yielding a terrible harvest.

It was true in all things that faint heart never won did its worst; I went my sinful course, flinging evil seed about me, and stopped not to consider how many I might bring to ruin.

Do you understand? perhaps not fully. Let me return to memories.

I happened once to spend an evening with some dozen youths gathered for social intercourse. I was much older, and it was quite by accident that I found myself among them; but, enjoying the reputation of a boon companion, they entreated me to remain. It flattered me and I stayed. They evidently looked to me for information, which made me all the more willing to show off my superior experience. Being a witty talker, I added not a little to the evening's enjoyment. We made little speeches, sang, and drank to each other. Now I knew that these young people would take as gospel truth almost anything I might tell them, believing any worldly wisdom I might point to as the road to success. The concluding word was given to me. I rose, ready to give them the benefit of my knowledge. "Dare to be happy!" was the motto I chose. I reminded them of the position I enjoyed in the world, averring that my life was brimful of satisfaction; that I had always had whatever man could wish for, and that I had had it because I had dared. It was true in all things that faint heart never won fair lady; there was a treasure of wisdom in these words beyond the treasures of Solomon. They were just entering upon life. I could give them no better advice to go by — no better aim to follow — than was expressed by these words: "Dare it — dare be happy!"

They thanked me with cheers of enthusiasm. They were flushed with wine, but another spirit than that of wine lay hidden in my words; its subtle influence was even then upon them, intoxicating their souls. With some of them its fumes, no doubt, passed away with the fumes of the liquor; but with others — three or

four of them — the false maxim had caught; they went out into opening life armed with a rule which consisted of falsehood mostly, and a particle of truth. It took them to the broad way, and not only them, but others through them. That lying principle, which sounded so grand and true, spread in widening circles, ruining soul after soul; it is still spreading, alas! and I see no end to the pernicious influence.

There is another recollection burning as molten lead upon my soul. I had been visiting friends in the country, and was on the point of leaving to return to town. The carriage was at the door, and I downstairs already, when I remembered having forgotten something in my room. I bounced up the stairs and came upon a little housemaid tidying the apartment. She was young and beautiful as Hebe; barely eighteen she looked. I took her into my arms and kissed her. She tore herself away, the flushes of shame in her face, crying: "I am a poor girl, sir, but I am honest!" "Poor, my child?" I said. "With a face and figure like yours one is never poor; you might buy the heart of a millionaire! Beauty is a wealth of capital if well laid out."

They were the words of the moment — one of those silly speeches which fast men abound in.

The girl was silent, blushing still; but I continued:

"And now, my fair one, you shall give me another kiss, of your own free will, to reward me for the useful lesson I have taught you. I dare say we shall never meet again."

She still resisted. But I was young and handsome, and thoroughly versed in the arts of persuasion. I presently held her in my arms again, and she did kiss me. Then I heard the horses pawing, and there was

I SAW NO PARTICULAR HARM IN WHAT I HAD DONE

the train to be caught. So I loosened my hold, and as though beauty were indeed the capital I had spoken of, bringing riches to the owner, I put a sovereign into her hand.

I saw no particular harm in what I had done. Thousands in my place, no doubt, would have said and done as I did. But in truth I was guilty of an awful thing! I had poisoned the very life-blood of the girl. Her innocence was gone; corruption had taken root in her soul. My spirit somehow has a knowledge of her future career. She had been engaged to an honest working man; but her beauty, if she married him, would not bear the interest she now coveted, so she broke with him. He had loved her, and hardly, if ever, got over the blow. She went her way putting out her capital, laying traps to the right and to the left; but cleverly as she laid them, she after all was caught herself, falling a victim where she had hoped to conquer, and was flung aside again. She was ruined, but the horrible lesson I had left with her was nowise rendered harmless; on the contrary, she improved it all the more. As a courtesan she continued her career, and soon there was none more knowing, none more dangerous, than she. One fool after another went the way to her house to his soul's ruin, and her capital laid out bore interest vastly, being the fruit of that first sovereign I had given her! But rich she grew not; the money went as it came, squandered recklessly. And before she dreamt of it, the capital itself was gone; she struggled awhile, sinking deeper and deeper, and died in utter misery. But even that is not all. The lesson I had taught her proved not only a poison to herself, but with it she poisoned others, teaching scores of

girls the pernicious lie: Beauty is a capital; lay it out! lay it out!

Thus it went with her with whom in life I had but a moment's intercourse, whose name even I never knew! What shall I say then of many others; what of Annie, against whom I sinned far more grievously? Strange that the spirit knowledge, which tells me so much, is entirely at fault whenever I think of her. But it is a blessing! What if she too were to rise before me crying: Thou didst it! thou didst it!

The force of example — I repeat it — is terrible, terrible! and the responsibility of all, therefore, is it great with whom influence rests in a special way, as it does with those, for instance, to whom the young are taught to look. That is why there are so many here who had charge of children — parents, guardians, teachers, nurses innumerable. They go to hell first, of course they should have taught the way of life. And not only they do; but they are followed by many of those whom are they followed by them, but by their children after them, generation rising against generation in awful accusation. I am one of the worst of those who dare not lift their head! so I may well speak in warning! I know what awaits me. I am thinking of Martin. Poor boy, it was I who brought him up, feeding him upon evil example. I have made him what he is. But what has become of him, and what will become of his children? I had no family in life — alas, I may have one in hell, larger than I care to see — the children of my iniquity! But there is hope for Martin; he is yet in life. May the Lord have mercy on him — on him and his!

How I loved him in spite of his waywardness! Perhaps it was self-love after all; perhaps I loved him only

inasmuch as he seemed to reflect myself. Yet there was power in that love, in spite of supervening jealousy. He grew more handsome, more taking than even I had been; ousting me by degrees out of my every pride; but jealous though I felt, I yet loved him. And the time came when he was master. I remember well how one day I was humbled by the sudden consciousness of it. I had been specially careful of his bodily development, seeing to it myself; his mental training I left to others. I taught him gymnastics and all sorts of manly exercises, in which I excelled — fencing, wrestling, and the like. He was tall and powerful, and exquisitely proportioned. Barely twenty, he resembled some athlete of antiquity. We practiced daily, and I found that he gained as steadily as I lost; there was a time at last when with difficulty I could hold my own. And then it came — I could never speak of it calmly — that he floored me, standing over me, a very Hercules of strength. From that day I knew that he had the ascendency over me. It was natural, for I had passed the zenith — he was approaching it; but it was mortifying, and I could not forgive it. And yet, with strange inconsistency, I was proud of him, loving him all the more fondly.

My grudge against him, however, took a more real turn when I found that he outdid me in the favor of woman as well. That was more than even my fondest love could stand.

Will he join me here? The beating of my heart seems to say yes; for he belongs to me, and I am here. Then I shall find an answer to that burning question which filled my soul as I quitted life, and which burns with a fire of its own here amid many fires. But ought I to wish for an answer? I have a frightful forebod-

ing at times that the answer my soul is craving will overwhelm me with horror. But, nevertheless, and though it should be all horrors combined in one, I am hungering and thirsting for it, nor can I rest till I find it. What is it he had to tell me?

LETTER IX.

How frightful is the deep stillness reigning in hell among these myriads of souls! I thought at first I should get used to it; but there is no getting used to it. It is stifling and oppressive. What a contrast with the multifarious hubbub of earth! Life may be ever so excited here, ever so restless, it is dead to the ear. I do not mean to say that words passing to and fro are devoid of sound, but it is unearthly, unclothed of its body, falling dead on the spot; I suspect that, like most things here, it is imaginary, unreal. Probably the meaning of anything that is said passes to the hearer without the medium of sound; he seems to hear with outward ears, but that is illusion.

Hell is filled with unruly souls. It is the hurly-burly of existence they need, but with all their effort they can never create sound. If never before they longed for a dull repose they do so now, yet are keenly alive to its utter hopelessness. They will hunt for tumult to all eternity, never hearing the sound they crave: they also have their reward.

As light increases, so does the uneasy expectation of my heart. I tremble for the hour when the glory from the other side will flash across the gulf and strike my blinded eyes. I shall have to see it! And Paradise, as seen from hell, must be a sight most dread — most terrible — piercing the heart. Yet I long for it — I groan for it — though the glimpse of bliss be fraught with exquisite torment; I hunger for it — "Let me have it," I cry, "though it should kill my soul."

Was not there something in the vanished time that was called the Lord's Prayer, beginning, "Our Father," a well of blessing to those who opened their hearts to it? Surely I seem to remember, but vainly I try to call back the words; they seem hovering about me as though I need but say, "Our Father," and all the rest must follow. I try and say so, but never get beyond; I have sometimes repeated these two words ten, twenty times, but it is quite hopeless — they are empty and meaningless; I have lost the prayer — it is all nothing to me. I just remember that there is a Father; but He is not my Father, and I am not His child. Yet I cannot refrain from racking my spirit for the once blessed words; surely they are somewhere — somewhere! My soul is thirsting, and there is not a drop of water to cool my tongue.

I return to the horror of existence. It is a mercy that after all one can choose one's society here; I should die if I were obliged to know all the vulgar rabble of common ruffians, thieves, murderers, card-sharpers, and the like. I have always been a gentleman. Of course I am aware now that I am not one whit better than those that I call the rabble,— the only difference consisting in a little outward finish, what we used to call culture on earth; and to be sure how proud we were of it! Our wickedness may be as great, if not greater than theirs; but it is not so coarse, there is a certain refinement about it, which flatters our notions of superiority. I consider myself a gentleman, therefore, as I always did, and am very careful with whom I associate. The rabble consists of the vulgar criminals and their belongings; but hell's upper ten thousand have never soiled their hands with low wickedness. We grew rich upon the spoils of others, and called it busi-

ness; we were proud, hard-hearted, and spoke of the claims of rank; we may have been liars and cheats, but always wore kid-gloves and were careful as to our tailor — we were gentlefolk, you see. The proverb "birds of a feather" is written up everywhere in hell, — we follow it out naturally; people here have an exquisitely developed instinct that helps them to judge in a moment of those they meet, aided — I should add — by the transparency of clothes. It is of course not quite easy here to carry out such principles, still society manages very generally to keep itself to itself. We eschew vulgarity and turn our back upon anything likely to shock our notions of good-breeding.

I met a charming young woman the other day who was received in the best circles here. Her history was known, but it did not seem to shut her out from us. She had forsaken her widowed mother, nearly blind though she was, eloping with a handsome actor. She died suddenly, carried off in the height of passion, and very naturally found herself in hell. A prey to the cold which we all experience, she was afire with a ceaseless longing for her mother on the one hand, whom she never will meet again, and for her lover on the other hand, whom she awaited with ardent desire. She ought not to have wished for a reunion, since that meant dragging him to hell; but her love being what it was, she lived and breathed in that cruel hope. She selfishly longed for him, saying they had sworn to live and die together. But he could not have been equally anxious; at any rate he kept her waiting years upon years. And during all this time her infatuated soul beheld him as she had known him last, handsome, in the prime of life, and the darling of the people. At length he arrives — a decrepit man on crutches, blear-eyed, and

a face that told his life. What a meeting! — she starts back as from an apparition. Can that be the lover of her youth, for whom she sinned, for whom she suffered! She loathes him, but she is driven to pursue him. Society here is well-bred, and shrinks from what ruffles its feelings. She was a charming creature, but we could no longer tolerate her. One after another we disowned her, and she disappeared with her former lover.

Let me add that one of the greatest evils in the world is a superabundance of love. Who would believe that love unrestrained sends more souls to hell than almost anything I could name? It is not the love which is pure and health-giving, for it is not fed by the Love Divine and Eternal. So much depends on what one loves and how one loves!

A woman arrived here some time ago, no longer young, but still beautiful, blue-eyed, fair-haired, and we all thought her charming. She was amiability itself; we could not think what brought her to hell; indeed there was no reason for it, but her unchastened love for her husband. It was quite touching to hear how she had given up her life to him, loving him a great deal more than he really deserved. She idolized him, forgetting everything for him, even her God. That was just it; she had given to her husband the heart's adoration which belongs to God alone. How could she have been happy in heaven? But her love, touching as at first sight it would appear, was after all nothing but a peculiar development of selfishness, and that is why it dragged her to hell.

And in hell she continues sick of love for her husband; it was the one longing of her life, so it needs must be the all-absorbing torment of hell. And she had her

desire, she saw him again; he arrived one day — with a heart full of another passion. He had never been faithful to her. Even hell pities the reward that is given her.

You have long ceased to doubt, I hope, that hell offers anything but horror. But there are moments, at rare intervals only, when all the thousand horrors within us seem congealed into one frightful sensation of stupor. Do not imagine it is a painless moment; feeling is swallowed up in indescribable anguish, a peculiar horror, not known at other times. And then — it is always sudden — hell stands aghast, trembling with dread. All pursuit ceases; every soul is left to itself, shuddering. Something is upon us — a spirit-deadening influence. It is not seen, but we are, each and all, aware of its indescribable terror. We know what it is; we stand tongue-tied and trembling. Satan has come to survey the souls in hell. Final power is not yet given him; for they are not yet judged. But he has learned to wait — satisfied, meanwhile, that they are added to daily. They are his, he knows, though the time of carrying them off is delayed. He knows the doom is coming when the wicked, for ever separated from the good, are assigned their place on the left of the Son of Man, and that they will be his then for ever and for ever.

How often in the young days of life I seemed full of promise to become good, but never reached the true aim of Christianity. The memories I have brought away of these half-strivings are fraught with bitterest regret, and yet they would move my tenderest tears,— if tears were left. It was Lily especially who in those days was the instrument of grace divine. From the

first it was given her, that wondrous power over me. Ah! say not it was all sinful that brought me to her feet! No; there was something higher, far higher, giving her an influence over my soul — a holy influence. All children I believe have something of it; but Lily was filled with that heavenly grace.

In winter-time, after dinner, we would rest awhile in the dusk, the firelight casting slumbrous shadows about the room. My mother would doze away; Lily and I sat dreaming. But how different were the spheres to which our thoughts would roam! I could have spent hours watching Lily as I did; she sitting on a low fender-stool, the light falling on her. I was in the dark, unnoticed by her, which added to my sense of enjoyment. She would fold her hands on her knees, as she loved to do in thoughtful moments. How beautiful she was, in that half-light especially — a little pale, but spiritualized. The red glow was reflected in her wonderful eyes, which shone marvellously. Her features seemed transfigured; she would sigh at times or heave a deep breath; I knew then that she was occupied in her mind. I watched her, greedily delighting in her perfect beauty. If there is truth in what people say of magnetism and sympathetic attraction, she must have felt my gaze. Who can tell? She sometimes really appeared uneasy; I saw from my corner how she would try to shake off some unconscious influence. I could scarcely refrain then from snatching her up and pressing her to my heart. But I conquered the desire — it would have broken the charm.

But sometimes Lily would sit down by me, and then we passed the twilight in pleasant talk; she never denied me her confidence. One evening I asked her what she

was thinking of in those quiet moments on the fender-stool.

"What I am thinking of?" she repeated, with her gentle voice. "Ah, Philip, thoughts will come to me full of longing, sometimes happy, sometimes sad. I fancy myself carried away at times right over the seas to another land; even to other worlds by thought will rise — up, up — beyond the stars. I seem carried away to Louisiana, that beautiful country, where everything is so different from here — richer, grander by far, and where winter is not known. By the great river I see a house with a shady veranda and a pillared hall; trees of the south grow about it luxuriantly. Here I was born; my earliest recollections twine around it. Memory carries me now through the lofty rooms. I flit from one chamber to another; my poor parents are nowhere. I roam through the garden, so rich in delight, through the cool groves by the river; but I am a stranger everywhere,— no one remembers the little girl. I see black men and stop to speak to them, but they only shake their heads mournfully.

Sadly I quit my beautiful home — home no longer to me, and the spirit carries me back over the lonely sea. Restless I seem to wander, passing many lands, seeing many things, meeting with kind people everywhere — but one thing I find not. And then I rise, beyond the clouds, beyond moon and stars. I seem to lose myself — thoughts vanish. I am at rest in a beautiful garden.

"I had believed nothing could be more beautiful than Louisiana, my own lovely home, but that garden is better still; for it is the garden of God — it is Paradise. And here I find them at last — my own dear parents; I knew I should find them again. And here there is

rest for my soul — nothing left to long for. I have my father again, my mother again; they tell me how happy they are, and how they love me."

"Lily's eyes were shining as with the light of the Paradise she was speaking of; she sighed, and then continued slowly:

"I am happy, too, for a moment; but then the servant comes in with the lamp, and with a sudden pain at the heart, I seem to be thrust down from heaven. I look about me bewildered, scarcely knowing where I am — I feel lonely and sad. Can you understand it, Philip?"

Of course I understood her; they were foolish dreams, and would make her ill. These twilight roamings ought not to be indulged in. But I did not say so.

One evening she asked me suddenly: "Philip, what makes people happy?"

Her question startled me, but I was not at a loss for an answer.

"I suppose their own heart," I said; "good health, too, and a pleasant home, where nothing is wanting to make one comfortable; a few kind people also to love one, I should say."

"Well, I think I have all that. Am I happy?"

"Are you not, sweetest Lily?" I returned.

"I don't know," she said slowly. "Something seems wanting. I cannot quite express it. . . . No one seems to need me in the world to make them happy — I am of no use to any one."

"You should not talk so, Lily! Are you not mother's delight, and my own? I am sure we need you. And you are of great use too! But why should a little girl like you be grieving about not being useful? You

have nothing to do as yet but be happy yourself, learn your lessons like a good child, and grow up as fast as you can into a nice little woman that will be a blessing to those who love her. But surely, Lily, you do not doubt that even now you make mother happy, and me too?"

"But you could do without me. And there are so many who ——"

"No, Lily; I do not think we should like to do without you. One is always glad of having some one to love."

Lily shook her head.

"I am nothing to you and her, Philip. She is your own mother, and you are her son. But what am I? I do not even belong to you. You found me and were kind to me."

"What you *are,* Lily? Why, if you are nothing else, you are my dear little friend, whom I would not lose for all the world."

"A friend? Is that something?" she said dreamily.

"Yes, a great deal!" I said. "A friend like you is a loving little girl who is ready to give not only her whole heart, but just her own self to him who loves her; she will smooth away his grief if he has any, and return his smiles. The little friend I want you to be is the greatest treasure to be found in life."

She looked at me wonderingly. "I do not understand you," she said.

"Well, you need not understand now. The time will come when it will be all plain to you. But you might promise me one thing, even now — will you be my little friend?"

She hesitated a moment; then, lifting her wondrous eyes straight to mine, she said candidly:

"Yes, dear, I will. It is nice to be *something!*"

"You are my all, Lily, if only you knew."

But from that moment a pleasant consciousness hovered between us. Often when I met her, or took leave to go to town, I whispered: "Sweet little Lily friend." And she smiled her own angel smile, saying: "Yes, dear, it is nice to be somebody's friend."

Ah, I love the memory of those twilight hours when she sat by me, and I could stroke her silky hair or hold her soft little hand in mine! But even close to me she would sink away into her dreams of home and Paradise, and I felt something like jealousy at having no part in these dreams.

One evening — how strange is the power of memory! I remember every word, every look even — we had been talking awhile, and I asked her: "But tell me, do you care for me, really?"

"How should I not, Philip? I have neither father nor mother; no one cares for me but aunt and yourself. Of course I must love you for it."

"I know, Lily. But I mean, could you love me even more?"

"I think so," she said meditatively.

She was then about twelve. At that age words fall from the lips easily. And Lily had a childlike and wonderfully spontaneous manner of uttering her thoughts; yet in conversation with her elders there was a marked difference between her and other children. Her words showed that she thought deeply, and the confidence with which she spoke could not but impress one's heart.

"I think so," she repeated, and sat thoughtful.

"What could I do to make you love me even more?"

"There is one thing you could do, Philip. I am an orphan child, having neither father nor mother. But I have learned from the Word of God that of brothers and sisters I have many — many. I know it, but I do not know them; I cannot go in search of them. I am only a little girl who is a stranger to the world, and it is not much I can do. But you, Philip, you are a man; you are clever and rich, and you go about among the people. Will you promise me one thing? Whenever you meet any of my poor brothers and sisters who are in want, will you be good to them, pitying them for God's sake and for my sake? Or if you will be really kind, will you try and find them out and take me with you, that together we may comfort them and help them? Will you promise me? Say yes, and you shall be the very dearest friend I have."

I felt the tears rise to my eyes; I could not answer at once, but after awhile I said:

"If I do as you wish me, Lily, will you be sure to love me always — always?"

"Oh, yes, dear; I cannot tell you how much!"

"Well, then, I promise you faithfully that I will do it. But cheer up now, my good, kind-hearted little sister; you must not be always thinking of things that make you sad. There, look at me, and let me see how brightly you can smile."

And she did look at me, and smiled as no doubt angels smile whose measure of happiness runneth over.

Do you not see that Lily had power over me — that I was almost becoming good, guided by that little hand of hers? If it was but miserable selfishness at first which brought me under her spell, it could not

lessen the fact that I felt and even yielded to the breath of the Spirit moving in that holy child-soul. The influence for good that may proceed even from a little child on earth is very marvellous.

I did begin to look about for Lily's suffering brothers and sisters. It did not cost me any great effort to do deeds of charity, for I was disposed to be good-natured; and for Lily's sake I took even a pleasure now in doing kind things.

Again, meeting in the dusk of the evening, I would tell her how I had succeeded here and there in making some poor creature happy. I described to her the misery in which I found this or that family, the way in which I assisted them; I told her of their joy and gratitude. And she listened with radiant face. Sometimes I took her with me, and it was my delight on such occasions to let her have all the planning and giving. It was strange how her sympathy would always hit upon the right thing!

But — alas that I must say it! — in reality I was far from being a new creature. Lily had power to touch my heart; but the flesh was strong, and the world held me fast. My goodness, at most, was a mere playing at being good.

When we separated, I going to South America, I continued for her sake to help the poor and suffering I fell in with. But my deeds of charity were no more than a kind of idol-worship of the memories I loved, of the hopes I revelled in to possess her more fully some day who was mine already. Besides, if I had not carried out her wishes, I could not have written her the letters I knew she looked for; knowing, moreover, that she loved me afresh for every deed of kindness I could tell her of. It was deceiving her,— deceiving

myself, perhaps,— but there was no deceiving the righteous Judge.

I found Lily in tears one day. She sat in silence with folded hands, one big tear after another trickling down on a book before her. It was her Bible.

"What is it, my child?" I cried. "Why are you troubled?"

She looked at me with her dovelike eyes, the tears trembling in them. "I am not troubled, dear," she said.

"But you are crying."

"For joy — yes, for joy. Look what I found!"

Her finger pointed to her Bible, and bending over her, I read:

"When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

I did not know at once what to say. It touched me, but at the same time I rather grudged her needing her Bible for comfort, and missing her parents so much. She had mother and me, and I wanted her to be happy. But I could not tell her, so I said after a while:

"Yes, that is beautiful, Lily,— just as though it were specially written for you. But brighten up now; I cannot have you cry, not even for joy, as you say. I'll be back in a quarter of an hour, and then we will have a walk."

When I returned an expression of quiet peace had settled on her face, not unusual with her; but from that day the words, "The Lord will take me up" seemed continuously present in her heart. She did not hide it. I could not shake off those words all at once, but did so after a while.

LETTER X.

AMUSEMENT! That is one of the common needs nowadays; the world requires to be amused — rich and poor alike. I do not say that, in itself, this is altogether blameworthy; it would be foolish to let the river of delight flow past, and never stoop to drink. But to make amusement the one question paramount when life is so serious, when neighbors are in trouble, and the poor in want — that surely is wrong. And yet that seems just what the world has come to. "How shall we amuse ourselves?" appears to be the great question nowadays, the solving of which, for thousands of men and women, seems to be the very object of living. They do not consider it necessary to be praying for daily bread, or return thanks when they have got it; but they never forget to cry out for amusement. And even the poor, with whom daily bread *is* a question, whose young may be hungry, and their aged be buried by the parish, must needs be amused!

It was not so always. In years gone the mass of the people were satisfied with doing their work and looking upon pleasure as a relaxation merely; but now amusement with many has come to be the thing to be worked and lived for. And acknowledging this to be a fact, history holds up an appalling precedent. When ancient Rome made pleasure the aim of life, the nation was approaching its doom. How shall it be with the world? I do not know when its end may be, but I know this — that those of her children who run recklessly after pleasure are on the broad way that leads

to hell; and the excess which is their sin on earth will be their punishment here. Is the world rich in places of amusement?— be sure so is hell. We too have our gardens, our Tivoli — call it Vauxhall, or Crystal Palace, or Champs Elysées, it matters not, the *thing* is here. And whatever is being invented on pleasure-hunting earth, we have it to perfection. Does the world flock by thousands to its amusements?— hell does so by millions. All pleasures, all passions, run loose here in awful confusion, and helplessly you are whirled along. Yet no matter what excess there be of wanton gaiety, there broods over all that deathlike stillness — hell's frightful atmosphere — which I have tried to describe before. Perhaps you remember the effect of sounds deadened by a muffling fog; that may give you a faint idea of what I cannot otherwise bring home to you. If one succeeds at times in breaking away from this horrible pretence of pleasure, it leaves one panting and spirit-broken, sick of existence and longing for rest; but despite the loathing one is immediately after it again, forcing the senses to what never yields them a shadow of delight. Amusement here, let me tell you, is a very lash of correction, driving all thoughts of pleasure far, far away. Ah, how they long for work, those poor souls, to whom labor on earth was so hateful, or, at best, but a means toward enjoyment. How gladly they would even slave on a galley here, deeming the meanest work a blessing. But the night has come when no man can work.

There is a memory in this realm of death of how the Son of God once descended to hell to preach to the spirits in prison, filling the space between the great deep and Paradise with the cry of His infinite

love, and proclaiming liberty to the captives. Then hell for a time was light as day; but most of those present hardened their hearts, and fell back into darkness.

I felt a burning desire to meet some one who had heard the voice of the Son of God, but I own it was a foolish wish, since it could do me no good — all being vanity now and nothingness; still, in spite of that knowledge, here one is always trying and longing for something.

There are naturally many souls in hell who heard that wondrous preaching, but they are all lost; and lost souls cannot help one to a ray of light. Had they but remembered a single word of the Savior's — laid it up in their hearts, I mean — they would not now be here. Some certainly pretend to recollect this or that, but what they said in answer to my inquiry was cant and blasphemy in their mouths; it gave me no comfort, and, despairingly, I turned from my desire.

I lately ventured upon an expedition through some outlying districts; do not be surprised at my saying I ventured, for I assure you it needs courage here to get to know more than is absolutely thrust on your knowledge. Discovery is full of horror, even to him who has nothing to lose.

Indeed, you must not ask me to describe to you all I saw and heard; it would take me too far, and it could not possibly interest you to hear all I might say concerning hell's inhabitants; those crowds of thieves, murderers, deceivers, liars, misers, spendthrifts, perjurers, forgers, hypocrites, seducers, and slanderers. But stop!— there are some I must tell you about. Look at that tribe of strutting turkeys in human guise!

They are the self-conceited, a very refuse of hell; they thought well of themselves once, but are a laughing-stock now.

And these miserable women flapping their arms wildly, and going about cluck-clucking like so many hens distressed for their brood, spreading wings of pity, but vainly seeking for aught to be gathered in!— they are the wicked mothers, groaning for the children they neglected in sloth or selfishness.

And those queer creatures fawning about so meanly, slobbering all whom they meet with sympathy, offering assistance right and left!— they are the merciless ones. Their hearts were too hard formerly: they are too soft now, and no one here requires their mercy.

A few other figures I may single out.

I have told you of the great black river here which is not Lethe. I was sitting one day near its bank, thinking of the sad past and sadder future; the turbid waves rolled heavily by.

Groans broke upon the silence about me. I started and perceived a strange figure, strangely occupied. It was a man of commanding aspect, handsome even, but in most painful plight. He sat by the river washing his hands, which dripped with blood. But for all his washing the dread crimson would not leave his fingers; as soon as he lifted them above the water, the red blood trickled down afresh. It was a pitiful sight.

He seemed to be aware of my presence, for he turned upon me suddenly, saying, "What is truth?" I did not reply at once, feeling it to be a question that should not be answered lightly; but, raising his voice, he repeated impatiently, "What is truth?"

"Well," I said, "it is a truth, and a sad one, that it is too late now for us to be seeking the truth."

This answer did not appear to satisfy him. He shook his head, turning away. And again he set to washing his hands.

I endeavored to draw him into conversation. I seemed suddenly to know that he was one of those doubly miserable souls who had seen the Son of Man face to face and heard Him speak, and I was most anxious to hear what he might have to tell me; but there was no turning him from his frightful occupation.

I left him after a while. Who he was I knew without the testimony of his purple-bordered toga and the ring on his finger — Pontius Pilate!

He shuns the city of the Jews, and spends his time by the river washing his hands. But of every passer-by he asks the question, What is truth? Whatever answer he receives he shakes his head: it is not general truths he wants to know about, but *the* Truth — truth absolute, and that is not known here. And do you perceive the cutting contrast? Pilate inquiring about truth, yet washing his hands in the river of falsehood!

I went my way through desert places — uncultivated tracts, that is, but nowise unpeopled; no spot in hell is uninhabited, however dismal and waste it may be. There are souls whom an inward necessity drives into the howling wilderness; those, for instance, who in life worked out dark plots ending in great crimes. These places are congenial to them.

There is one terrible figure one meets at times in the dreariest wastes — a man tall and powerful, half-naked, the skin of some animal being all his clothing. The hair hangs wildly about his temples; there is a furtive look in his eye, and his brow is gloomy. There is a mark upon his forehead, and he carries a club; not that seems to require it, for he is a fugitive always,

in constant fear of being slain. Every one who meets him trembles, but he is afraid of the weakest and most helpless of creatures, fleeing them each and all for fear of his wretched life. Always alone, he seems nowhere and everywhere. A cursed fugitive he was on earth — a cursed fugitive he is in hell, for the Lord has set His mark upon him, that every one should know Cain and not slay him.

I hurried away, anxious to get rid of the terrible sight. Here, then, I had found a soul that was more wretched than myself. But the thought was poor comfort; I could not shake off the impression of the lying flattery with which they buried me. But I forget — I have not told you my first experience by that vile river. As I neared it I was met — would you believe it — by an account of my own obsequies. It was sickening! A miserable versifier, lately come hither it seems, was hawking about his latest production. I do not know that he really knew me, but he insisted on flourishing a paper in my face, and I could not help reading with my own eyes the flaring title, to this effect:

"New and mournful ditty, in memory of Philip H., Esq., whose heirs could pay for the grandest funeral and the most flattering parson to escort him to heaven, but could not keep him out of hell. Leading sentiment — his Reverence's own — 'We shall meet again!'"

A funeral ditty in honor of me . . . staring me in the face by the river of lies! . . . I bit my lips, for I needs must read it.

It began with a panegyric on my many virtues, very few of which I really possessed; it next broke out into a doleful lamentation about the loss society had sus-

tained by my untimely death, and ended with a description of the blessed life I had entered upon to receive the reward of my deeds, joy and glory unspeakable, which henceforth were my blessed inheritance! Terrible agony!

I felt as though a hundred daggers had entered my soul. Sick at heart I crumpled up the wretched production and fled from the place. It was some time before I could get over the deep bitterness of this experience, and when in a measure I had conquered it, that parson's "leading sentiment" remained as a drop of rankling poison. Thou fool!—or hypocrite—which is it? As though a man had but to die to go straightway to bliss! I will not enlarge upon the hopeful statement—you little dreamt of its possible meaning when you said, "We shall meet again!"

It was about this time that I first came across a king in this place. Pitiful sight! It is scarcely possible to conceive a greater contrast between the once and the now—kingship on earth and kingship in hell!

Of all the abjects one meets with here, I do believe emperors, kings, and princes of every description are the poorest. There are no empires and kingdoms here, save indeed, Satan's, and nothing deserving the appellation of government. What rules us is a kind of social instinct and the habits of life we brought with us from the world. So, you see, kings and princes are nowise needed. Their rank of course entitles them to respect, and as on earth so here, one bows involuntarily to their exalted position; but in truth they are too miserable to look for respect. It is with them as with the image of some castaway saint, the gilding of which has worn off, and which ends its days in the lumber-room, igno-

SAD PRETENCE OF FORMER GRANDEUR

miniously forgotten. Their former greatness was merely conventional; it was gilding, in fact, and no real gold. It has worn off, and there is nothing left to bespeak their majesty. The poor kings have no kingdom here to display their greatness, no armies that will fight and die at their bidding, no millions to be squandered; they have nothing left but the sad pretence of former grandeur. Their courtly state is represented by a few wretched sycophants who stick to them, not for love but for gain illusive of course, and following former habit merely. I said they are miserable,— *weighed down* would be a more descriptive word, and literally true, for they nearly sink beneath the burden of their crowns. Do you wish to know the possible weight of a crown? I will meet you with another question: can you tell me how great a king's responsibility may be on earth? They weigh tons these crowns, believe me. The poor kings, propped up as they are by ministers and satellites, can scarcely more than crawl here, so heavy is their burden.

Worse off than any are those potentates whose names on earth boasted of the addition "the Great;" alas, those great ones are peculiarly small here, and those five letters add an enormous weight to their crowns!

Of truly great sovereigns, of course none arrive here, and those others whom the world called Great received that appellation merely because they were either great destroyers of human life, slaughtering the people by thousands for their own miserable renown, or perhaps because they outdid all other men and princes in that peculiar knavery which goes by the name of state-craft. Some few also may have come by their distinction quite by chance; perhaps they had clever ministers working for their glory. But these sometimes are

the most conceited of all crown-bearers; nothing is left for them but to go to hell when they have done.

What a gain it would have been for those poor potentates if, instead of striving for the appellation "the Great," they had been content to be called "the Good," or "the Beloved!" Charity then, with them also, might have covered a multitude of sins. Now nothing is left but the wailing and gnashing of teeth.

You never hear them speak; sighing and groaning seems to be their one means of intercourse. But no one cares to listen; indeed they are scarcely fit for society. The knowledge of this makes them shy and retiring; one hardly ever meets them; and if they do venture abroad, they are at once set upon as a hawk by innumerable sparrows — persecuted by all who suffered through them in life, as many as half a nation sometimes.

How enviable might have been their days on earth! Blessed beyond their fellows, all was theirs to make themselves and others happy; but ambition prevented them from seeing that their crown might — ay, should — be a well of blessing for the people. They were always speaking of their right divine, calling themselves kings by the grace of God; they forgot that it would have been far better to own themselves poor sinners through the grace of God than kings by right divine, and by that right be cast into hell.

I spoke of destroyers of human life, but one need not be a king or emperor for that; some of the most ruthless slaughterers of humanity the world has known were only generals, admirals, marshals, and the like.

These also continue their career in hell — in vain endeavor. There are plenty here to flock to their standards — all those, namely, who on earth were for-

getful of the peace and goodwill which the God of love proclaimed to mankind. They meet here, hundreds of thousands of them, and, like so many grinning skeletons, at once prepare for battle. Vainest show! Their artillery produces mere smoke. The spectre phalanx charges: one expects a great onslaught, but it is nothing; they merely change sides, as it were, and begin the battle afresh. They are unable to shed blood now, but they are for ever spending their soul's energy in miserable bloodthirstiness.

I thought of the warriors of Walhalla — foolish comparison! for there is nothing in common between the heroes there and the would-be heroes here. The warriors of Walhalla are said to be resplendent with strength and glory, living not only a real but a perfect life; whereas their wretched semblances here are only fit to move laughter and pity.

You know that we are always suffering thirst — an agonizing, burning thirst — ever longing for a drop of water to cool the tongue. No one, one would imagine, would willingly come to try and slake his thirst with the stagnant water of the horrible river; nevertheless there are some who do try it, quite secretly though, as if that could be kept a secret! For their whole body swells and is puffed out with the slimy falsehood, which, breaking through their every pore, turns them into positive lepers of lying. Having drunk once they always drink again, but their thirst is never quenched.

As I am thinking of ending this letter, the shadow of a saying crosses my memory, that of good things there are always three. I forget which of earth's tongues has molded this into a proverb, but something more than a proverb often troubles me now: I remem-

ber that I used to be taught to believe in the Trinity in Unity, but I never get beyond the two now — I know something of a Father, and something of a Savior; but was not there a third to help one to say "*our* Father" and "*my* Savior?" Alas the idea is a blank now, leaving a shadow to haunt me!

There are other three I am vainly trying to recall to my heart — faith, hope, and charity. I know nothing of faith now, and nothing of hope. I might have known charity, and I once believed I knew love: but now, alas, I know only what it might, what it should have been?

Oh that I could warn you who still walk in hope! Love is no light thing, but the deepest outcome of the soul. Had I known it truly, faith and hope now would stand by my side.

Be warned my brothers, my sisters! My heart yearns for you; it yearns for thee, my silent friend, who never with a word even hast answered any of these letters; for thee, mother, who never understoodst my deepest need; for thee, Martin, who in just retribution art as the lash now adding torment to torment. I love thee still,— what is it thou wouldst have told me? My heart is yearning, my brothers, my sisters; but vain, vain, is the longing; it leaves me in hell!

LETTER XI.

WOULD you believe it — not only my sins, but even the "good deeds" of my life come back to me in torment! I can but add, it is very natural! For even our best actions are full of blemish. Every one of them leaves a sting behind, and if it did not prick conscience then, it has power to enter the soul now, wounding it deeply.

There was a clerk in our counting-house, a young man, in whom I was interested. I trusted him entirely; he filled a responsible position, acting as cashier. Various little things coming under my notice first caused me to doubt his honesty. I watched him, and discovered that he had contracted a habit of gambling. Chance offered me an opportunity of taking him in the act.

He frequented a low gaming-house; I had been directed to the place. The adventure was not without risk to myself, but that was nothing to me. It was a wintry evening, dark and blustering, when, wrapped in an ordinary overcoat, I approached the apparently uninhabited house. In answer to a peculiar knock, however, the door was opened, and having passed a low dark passage, I entered a well-lit room. I found a company of gamblers assembled, as numerous as varied, evidently enjoying themselves, though the place reeked with the fumes of tobacco and gin. Several tables were going, one of them was kept by my young scapegrace, who apparently enjoyed his dignity of banker. Acting

on a sudden impulse, I faced him and staked a small sum.

The sudden sight of me had a terrible effect on him. He grew ashy, and the cards fell from his hand. Having regained some self-command, he seemed about to rise, either to rush from the place or sink down at my feet. But a look from me was sufficient to rivet him to his seat. One of those present, perceiving his confusion, handed him a glass of port; he seized it eagerly and drained it. His pallor yielded to a flush; he looked me in the face. But coldly I disowned him — standing before him as a stranger merely, who desired the continuation of the game. So did the rest of the company. None of them suspected the peculiar relation between myself and the unfortunate croupier. I was determined the rascal should suffer; I compelled him to play. With trembling hands, scarcely knowing what he did, he dealt the cards, gave and received cash. The game went on, and as chance would have it, the youngster had all the luck. But I could abide a turn of the tide; I knew it would come, and presently I began to force the game. I could afford to play higher than any of them probably had ever done before. The excitement grew to intensity; with the croupier it appeared simply maddening; his eyes started from his head. Another stake, and I had broken the bank!

With a yell of despair the unhappy youth sprang to his feet, and crying, "All is lost!" was about to rush past me and break from the place. "Not all!" I said under my breath, seizing hold of his arm; "more still might be lost. Stop a minute; we leave this house together!"

He was obliged to take his hat and coat and follow me. The company stared of course, but all was done

so quietly that none felt justified in demanding an explanation.

I took him with me, walking by my side and trembling visibly. Not a word was spoken till we entered the library of my house. There I confronted him, and did not spare him. He who had been trusted beyond his age — trusted entirely — a gambler and a thief!

He stood before me crushed and overwhelmed with shame. He ceased praying for mercy for himself, but entreated me to spare his widowed mother, whose only stay he was.

I did not relent so easily, although, considering that he had had a lesson, I determined to pardon him; but I was also determined that he should remember that night as long as he lived.

In agony he lay at my feet when I promised mercy at last, saying I would keep the matter to myself, and allow him the opportunity of making up for his wrong; he might do so, and thank me for not ruining his prospects.

He prepared to take his leave, and staggered to the door, scarcely able to stand on his feet. It had been too much for him. I saw I could not let him go, or his miserable secret would at once become known to his mother. I rang for my valet, and ordered him to give the young man a bed in my house.

The following morning found him in delirium; brain fever supervened. I thought of the poor widow, and how anxious he had been she should not know. I resolved to keep his secret; the servant, I knew, could be trusted. So I wrote to his mother that I had been obliged to send him away on business suddenly; it would

be a several weeks' absence — meanwhile she might be at rest about him.

Thus his fate, next to God, was left with me entirely. He was seriously ill; I had him nursed conscientiously, dividing nearly all my time between him and his mother. I really acted as a brother by him, as a son by her. When recovery had set in and he knew me again, I surrounded him with kindness, doing my utmost to bring him back to health and self-respect.

Some six weeks elapsed before he could go back to his mother. She was told he had been ill on his journey. On a journey indeed he had been, returning from the very gates of death. His mother never learned the true cause of his absence. I placed him in another branch of the business; he rose by degrees, and I ever found him a faithful servant.

Now to the point. You think perhaps that I had every reason for being thoroughly satisfied with myself for once. *I* should have thought so at the time! But here, where the scales fall from one's eyes, where everything appears in uncompromising nakedness, one learns to judge differently.

There was no wrong in catching the bird by the wing as I did, and holding him tight till he dropped, thoroughly frightened. I had saved him from his sin. But looking back now I see that pride and self-consciousness guided my hand. Vanity was flattered by the moral ascendency I had over the youth; a look of mine had sufficed to force him to continue awhile in his wicked course, and then I could have staked my soul that he would not again touch a card to his dying day. I knew it, I mean, even at the moment, and felt elated by the knowledge.

My subsequent kindness to him, I fear, sprang from

a feeling that I had been hard on him. I had taken a cruel delight in his utter humiliation. What was left then, I ask, to make the deed a good one? Judge for yourself, my friend! Humiliation is for me now — I feel it deeply whenever I think of his contrition and suffering.

That night, in fact, left her traces on his life. The brightness was wiped out of it. He had been a light-hearted youth; he was a sad-browed man. A shy, almost timorous look, witnessed to the memory of that occurrence, although it remained a secret between him and me.

You see, then, that even our so-called good deeds may weigh on our souls: is it not terrible? But how little do they deserve to be called good, since few of them, I fear me, if thoroughly examined, will stand the test! Not that I would deny there being such things as good works; though, if viewed aright, what are they but the mere doing of our duty? How indeed could they be more, if we have the means and power of doing them!

Was not there something we used to call the articles of belief? I have a faint recollection. Did they not refer to the mystery of the Trinity, and were they not, like the Lord's Prayer, a support to Christian souls?

I have tried to remember them, driving the brain to the verge of madness; but I have given it up now. What would be the use if I could remember, if I could repeat those articles, and the whole of the catechism besides? It would be words — words only, as empty and hollow as everything about me. It is faith only which could give them their true meaning. Faith?— what is faith? I know about it. I know that its ob-

ject is the Son of God. The very devils know as much as that. I know that He is the Savior. But how He saves, and how a lost soul can come to have part in Him, woe is me, I cannot tell.

I feel about faith as I do about repentance. I think if I could repent but for one short moment — repent truly — salvation would be mine. But vain is the trying, I cannot — cannot repent. At times I feel as if I were very near that blessed experience, as if my being would dissolve in tears,— ah vainest deception! "Oh for a tear — a single tear!" I keep sighing, "Father of mercy,"— but what boots the prayer of anguish if barren of faith?— "Father of mercy, oh grant me a tear!"

Time passes. Nay, this is nonsense, since there is no time here. Something, however, appears to pass; I infer that from the increasing glimmer of light. The blissful moment seems to be approaching when the glory of Paradise will swallow up the night of hell. But I speak of what I have not seen. It may be an awful moment, sublime rather than blessed, and it may be in the distance of unmeasured ages. . . .

Broad is the way which leads to destruction; but how broad is not known till you see it from hell.

Men find it a pleasant road; they go along dancing and singing, as it were, enjoying the moment, and never asking whether they give it to God or to the devil. They think of the future only as far as it may concern some pleasure they are anticipating, some ball or play perhaps, or even the new clothes they are going to wear. They call the hour of waiting an eternity, and know not the awful import of the word. "We love to live," they say; but death holds them in his embrace. Holbein's well-known "Dance of Death" is more than a

picture, I assure you. They dance, they make love, they chatter, they eat and sleep through life. A sudden wrench — and lo, they wake in hell.

There are others who grovel along that road. One would imagine them to find it irksome, but by no means. The mole in the ground is as satisfied in his way as the bird in the air. There are human moles. "We lead steady lives," they say, and grovel in the dust. "We have eyes to see,"— of course they have; it is but a myth which asserts that moles are blind. They have an eye, I assure you, for the smallest advantage they can pick up in their earthly course. Not that they look for the small gains merely; it is the great ones they like, and burrow for them assiduously. That is what they use their eyes for — to peer about in the dust; they never direct them heavenward. They do not seem aware even of the starry sky above the clods of earth. They spend their lives in trying to break those clods for something that may be within; and, grovelling along, they sooner or later come upon a hole in the ground. They did not look for it, and tumble in unawares. Death has swallowed them up; and, recovering from the fall, they find themselves in hell.

It is truly to be marvelled at! All men know that their portion is to die, but few of them ever think of death, and fewer still prepare themselves for dying. Death comes to most men as an unexpected visitor who will take no denial, though one never made ready for him. What is there left for them but a terrible waking in hell!

It is so with most; and more marvelous still, as I have said already, one finds people here one would never have dared to look for. They had gained the veneration and love of the world, even of good people

in the world; the tearful prayers of their friends went to heaven, mourning their death. But *they* had not gone to heaven; they are in hell; for God judges not with the eyes of men. They may have been excellent people and possessed of many a virtue, but they lacked one thing which alone avails in the end; they had not the heart of faith which yields itself to God entirely. They may have gained the whole world, but they lost their own soul.

And again, there are others one most certainly expected here who have never arrived. Their evil reputation, their works went before them, announcing them, as it were; but they are looked for in vain. There is only one way of accounting for this. Great sinners though they were, iniquitious and full of pollution, they must yet have come to that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation. Perhaps at the very last the Savior stood up between them and hell, where their place seemed prepared for a certainty.

You who had loved your dead and grieve for them tenderly — with trembling hearts and tearful voice I hear you ask: "May we not go on loving them, helping them perhaps with our true heart's prayers?"

I know not. Yet pray — pray with all your soul and without ceasing. One thing I am certain of, that the prayer of love is never vain; the tears of love can never be lost! For God is love, and His Son is the fulfilment of that love to all eternity.

Looking backward and looking forward to me is fraught with equal pain. I see nothing before me but an endless existence which knows not of hope, while all behind me is wrapt in the wild regret of a life that is lost.

Hell yields a terrible knowledge — how blessedly

fruitful life might have been! Happy ye are whose life is still in your hands. While there is life there is hope — never was there a truer word. Do not, I beseech you, yield to the pernicious delusion that you have lost your opportunity — that it is too late! That lie has ruined more souls than all earth's wickedness combined. It is *not* too late! And if death awaits you to-morrow, it is *not* too late! Your life, though even now it be running out its last grains of sand, may yet bring forth fruit — the blessed fruit of peace, of joy unspeakable; the crown of life may yet be yours.

If you would but repent! Ah! turn, turn from your ways, and seek for peace where it is to be found!

Could I but let you see things as I see them, you would not despair! Wretched, undone, and lost though you feel yourselves, you need not be hopeless. Despair has no right on earth — its true realm, alas, is here! And here only it is ever too late. Do you not know that your life on earth is but a part, an infinitesimally small part of the existence given to you, and that little is lost even if all earthly hopes have failed? I need not have said all; for no man is left so entirely desolate. Waste and ruined though life may appear to you, there is many a spot left where the waters of content may spring — where joy even for you may be found to be growing, if you could but trust! And the world is not all. Behold the stars, they are more than you could number. If the world indeed were lost and earthly life a failure, what is it? There are other worlds awaiting you, a better life is at hand. Look up, I say, and despair not! It is a lie if any one tells you it is too late. It is *not* too late. You may yet be fully satisfied. This is a truth as unshakable as the existence of God Himself. Repent thee, O man! O woman! and

turn from thy ways; turn to Him who can save thee, who will save thee! However late it be, there is yet time for thee to begin a new life. But delay not — ah delay not to enter upon the happy road that may lead thee from star to star, even into realms of joy eternal. Delay not, I say; for if death surprise thee on the road of despair with sins unforgiven, heaven and all its stars will fade away in the night that evermore must enwrap thy soul.

Again I say, it is not too late. Whatever be lost, one thing is yet to be saved — thy hungering soul, her peace, and the life to come.

Hast thou lost money and riches?— Thy soul is worth immeasurably more.

Is thy past a failure, undoing even thy future?— Behold eternity, and work for that.

Wast thou deceived in love?— Love will save thee at the last.

Is thy life degraded?— Look upon Life exalted on the Cross.

Has the world not satisfied thee?— There is heaven; try it!

Have earth's joys proved faithless?— There is an heritage to come!

How little then is lost, even if it be thy all, and how much there remains to be gained? Take heart, I say, for verily it is not too late! There is yet time to begin a new, a holy, happy, and even joyful life!

I have seen her! It was as though death again had clutched me. Shaken to the depth of my soul, I fell to the ground at the dread aspect, stricken with remorse. I saw her — her against whom I have sinned

so terribly that my own heart and conscience ever stand up to accuse me.

I have never had courage to menton it to you, my once truest friend; but I have always had a frightful foreboding that, sooner or later, I should meet Annie in hell, whose life and soul I murdered. She is here, and I have seen her!

I was strolling about with an old acquaintance. "Do you know Undine?" he said suddenly. "No," I replied. "There she is," he continued, pointing towards a pond at some little distance.

And I saw a youthful figure, dressed in the airiest of garments, and with dishevelled hair. Her light robe seemed to cling to her figure and to be dripping with water. She was trying, now to wring her wet clothes, now the heavy masses of her hair. She looked up. I stood trembling. It was Annie!

Annie indeed! The same lovely features, the same enchanting figure, and yet how changed — how terribly changed! The same features, but the light was gone. Womanhood had fled, the merely animal had triumphed. Passion, vice, and despair vied for the mastery. She looked much older, though the space between her ruin and her death comprised, I should say, a few years only. I seemed to have a knowledge that despair had driven her to a watery grave.

I stood rooted to the ground with horror, as a murderer at the sudden sight of the gallows. She was *my* work, degraded, and lost, yet lovely once and pure!

There she sat, wringing her garments and the tresses of her hair — and wringing her hands in hopeless agony; sigh upon sigh breaking as from a heart overwhelmed with shame.

I thought of escaping, feeling as though a possible

word from her must be a dagger to kill me. But I know not what power drove me towards her. Was I going to throw myself at her feet?

Now only she perceived me. Darting up, she gave me one look of terror and loathing, and hurried away. It was impossible for me to reach her. The power of abhorrence alone was sufficient to make her keep me at a distance. And presently she escaped from my sight altogether, lost in a troop of bewildered spirits just arriving from the shores of death.

I turned and fled, followed by the Furies.

LETTER XII.

I HAVE been to the post-office. That institution also is represented here, as I found out quite recently. Truly nothing is wanting in this place except all that one needs in order to live and to hope.

I had gone to inquire for letters. There is something very curious about this post-office of ours. You have heard of what befell Uriah. There have always been people who, betraying their neighbor, have done so by writing. But the invention is older even than that notorious letter, originating, no doubt, with the father of lies in the first place. It was he who inspired that piece of treachery, just as he inspired Judas' kiss. Treason by writing is known all over the world now. There are those who delight in the cleverness of such a letter, quite priding themselves on the art of taking in their fellows.

Be it known, then, that every such letter goes to hell at the expense of the writer, to be called for sooner or later — not by the person to whom it is addressed, but by the sender; some few cases excepted — King David's to begin with — where true repentance cancels the writing. That is the meaning of our post-office, and I assure you it is most humiliating to be seen there; for even here one perceives the meanness of such correspondence, the writer's punishment consisting in having to read it over and over again to his lasting confusion.

I somehow could not rest till I had been to inquire for letters; to my great relief there were none for me! Bad as I was, I had after all never been a downright

Judas, and I felt ready to give thanks for that assurance. I had no real satisfaction in the feeling; still, for a moment, it seemed I had.

But such letters are not all: there are spurious documents and false signatures here more than can be counted. Let men beware how they put pen to paper; writing has a terrible power of clinging to the soul. None but God Himself can blot it out.

I never knew more than two people capable of teaching me patience — my mother and Lily — Lily's influence over me being the stronger by far. My mother's props were propriety and duty; but Lily moved me by that wonderful goodness of hers, that sunny warmth that emanated from her loving heart. In the exuberance of masculine strength I often inclined to be violent and overbearing, ill brooking opposition and delighting in conquering obstacles, yielding to the absolutely impossible only with clenched fists: submissiveness did not grace my nature. That indomitable spirit of mine would break out at times on our memorable journey to the south; but on that journey, also, Lily's power over me was fully apparent. I was learning from her daily without knowing it, nor did she know it, unconscious as she was of her soul's beauty: patience was one of the many good things to which she led me.

We had reached Lucerne, intending to go over the St. Gothard to Italy. I wanted Lily to have the full enjoyment of crossing the Alps, there being to my mind nothing more beautiful than the sudden transition from the austere north to the genial life-expanding south; and passing by the Gothard, or the Splügen, or the Simplon, one can gather the fulness of all Italy into one day as it were.

The weather at Lucerne was most unfavorable, and kept us waiting full eight days. I chafed. Morning after morning Lily and I went to the great bridge to have a look at the sky; but little sky we saw; everything was mist and spray, hiding all prospect of lake or mountain-top. My vexation was boundless; day after day the same miserable lookout! I thought them wretched, those excursions after breakfast, but their memory is sweet. Lily was leading me up and down that queer old bridge — a wild animal in chains. It needed but the pressure of her soft little hand and my grumblings were silenced.

How clever she was — how ingenious even — in amusing me. Traveled folk will remember that old-fashioned structure spanning the Reuss; it is covered, and the spaces between the woodwork that supports the roof are filled with antique paintings — both naïvely conceived and grotesquely executed. She would suddenly stop now in front of this picture, now in front of that, her delightful remarks again and again restoring my good humor.

The weather cleared at last, to our great satisfaction. We had gone to the bridge, earlier than usual, when suddenly the mists parted, revealing the dazzling mirror from shore to shore; and, rolling upward, the curtain disclosed the mountain scenery, so lovely, so grand. We stood, spellbound, watching the transformation: the splendid expanse of water, from which the country rises, height upon height, mountain upon mountain, the great Alps behind them lifting their virgin whiteness in the radiant air.

The following morning, then, we started at sunrise, crossing the lake and thinking hopefully of the Gothard. The boatmen doubted the weather, but we hoped for

good fortune, enjoying the present, which had steeped all nature in floods of light. How beautiful it is, how surpassingly beautiful, that alpine scenery, lifting you into high regions, still and pure! The first alpine-rose nearly cost me my life — it was for Lily. We drove and walked alternately. It was a day the memory of which sank into the soul. As the sun went down we passed through the wild dark glens that lead to the valley of Ursern, the restful beauty of which, so simple yet sublime, opens out before you as though earth glorified were a fact already. We passed the night in the little town of Andermatt. The following morning — what a change! The boat-people had been right: snow covered the ground; a storm swept the valley.

My impatience was by this fresh delay stung to frenzy. One day passed — another — a third; we continued weather-bound. To take it quietly was impossible to me. I set out upon several expeditions by myself to explore the neighborhood, fraught with danger to life and limb though they were. Lily, fearful lest anything should befall me, entreated me to abstain, and to please her I yielded. How sweetly she set herself to reward me! What none could have done, she did, making the time pass pleasantly, and teaching me patience. She took me about the little town visiting the people. The houses and cottages seemed all open to her, and the simple folk received her like an old friend.

Now it had an interest of its own, no doubt, to become acquainted with the home-life of this alpine retreat, but, after all, Lily was the center of all I saw and heard. And how should it have been otherwise, when she was as a sunbeam gliding from house to house, unutterably lovely in her unconscious sympathy, calling up smiles wherever she went, and leaving a

blessing behind her! I am sure the people thought so, feeling the better for having seen her. Poverty brightoned on beholding her, and suffering lessened; she seemed welcome everywhere; it was marvelous. An ordinary observer would have said, "Yes, such is the power of youth and beauty." But a deeper fascination went out from her, since hers were higher graces, known to God.

The involuntary sojourn against all expectation yielded its own gain, enriching life as with an idyl brought home to our minds in that alpine solitude.

Not that I ceased fretting at the delay. One evening I asked Lily: "How can you make yourself so contentedly happy in this wretched place, when we might be spending days of delight beyond?"

"Oh," she said, "it is not difficult. Even though we are kept here against our will, and the place seems dull and desolate with the gray mists about us, yet I know that there *is* beauty awaiting us on the other side of the mountain; a few days only, a few hours even, and we may be there."

She was growing thoughtful. "Philip," she continued presently, "does it not remind you of life itself? The world often seems cold and dreary, not yielding the sunny warmth one craves. But then we do know that Paradise is beyond,— the true home prepared for us in the house of our heavenly Father. As yet there is a mountain between us and the place beyond, the mount of crucifixion, of denying ourselves; it is for us to pass it, and then we do reach home, where earth's troubles are all left behind. . . ."

And before long we did find ourselves on the other side, resting from the journey in a charming villa on the bank of Lago Maggiore. Lily and I were sitting

in a pillared hall, listening to the soft cadence of the waters, and enjoying an indescribably enchanting view of the island-dotted lake. Mountains framed the picture beyond, rising higher and higher, earth vanishing into sky — the most distant heights scarcely to be distinguished from the white clouds on the sunny horizon.

From seeming mid-winter we had reached the perfection of a genial clime. Lily's hands twined white roses and myrtles which she had gathered about the place. She played with the flowers, now wreathing them, now unwreathing them. There was a bridal purity about those children of the south, and Lily was herself the sweetest of blossoms. My heart burned; I longed to seize the hands that held the flowers, and cover them with kisses, but a holy power forbade me. Ever and again I felt as though some angel were standing between Lily and myself.

"What are you thinking of?" I asked, my voice betraying my emotion.

"I?" she said gently, lifting her soft gaze, and my heart was stilled. "I am thinking of that poor dark mountain valley we left behind. The memory of it seems to enhance the beauty we now enjoy, deepening its riches and our sense of them. And, feeling thus, I cannot but bless the time spent on the other side of the dividing mountain, though it seemed gloomy and cold, and the longing was great.

"Don't you think, Philip, that one day when we have reached heaven, we shall be looking back with similar feelings upon the troubled times we may have spent on earth? I think we shall, and that we shall be able to bless them, if we now accept them in patience and in hope, looking to God and His dear Son.

Their memory will even add to the bliss prepared for us."

A strange sensation crept through me at these words of Lily's — a holy tremor I might call it, but fraught with pain. Should I be looking back some day from the fields of glory, back upon life on earth? Ah, what a life. I *would* mend my ways — indeed I would!

But I never succeeded in climbing that mountain of which Lily had spoken — the mountain of crucifixion. Its weight, on the contrary, is now upon me, crushing me to all eternity.

A journey through Italy for a man of my description may well be called a trial of patience. Custom-house-officers, luggage-porters, guides, hotel-keepers, and the whole tribe of beggars swarm about you like persecuting wasps. The miserable greed of that class of Italians, with their constant attempts at cheating you, was more than I could brook. I often felt ready to thrash every mother's son of them that came in my way. But here also Lily was my saving angel. Having frightened her to tears once by an outbreak of passion, I felt so sorry at having grieved her that I was ready to submit all traveling affairs to her decision, satisfied she should guide me — another Una leading the lion! She needed only to place her hand on my arm, looking at me with her beseeching eyes, and I was conquered, no matter what had been the provocation. She understood, none better than she, how to deal with the meanness that roused me. Blessings followed her where I met but imprecation. Blessings indeed seemed to grow up about her path wherever she went, and the blessing included me. I was growing better — I felt it. But it must have been a delusive feeling after all, for my heart was never changed.

LETTER XIII.

THERE are very aged people in hell, naturally. To be two or three thousand years old, according to human computation, is nothing unusual here. There are men in this place who lived in the time of Sardanapalus, of Cyrus, of Alexander the Great; who knew Socrates perhaps, or Cicero, Horace, Seneca, and the like. Indeed, who can tell, but some of these historic personages themselves are here! There are people here who remember the fall of Ninevah, the sacking of Troy, the destruction of Jerusalem; who consulted the stars with the Chaldees of old, who tended the flocks in the days of Abraham, who helped to build the pyramids of Egypt; others are here to whom Noah preached the deluge. Hell, then, would seem to be a fine place for the pursuit of history; but somehow no one cares for that study here, things being dead in this place and void of interest. I myself do not care in the least to become acquainted with historic characters — the only longing I am conscious of in this respect, being to meet with a contemporary of the Savior of men,— one who saw and heard Him, I mean. But it is a fruitless desire. There are many here of course who lived in His day, and even listened to His teaching; but, although they say they remember, they are quite incapable of imparting anything; or they speak of a false Messiah, of a deceiver of the people. There is not a particle of truth in all their talk, and it is truth I am thirsting for so grievously. Is it not terrible?

But I am wandering from my subject: I was going

to say that old people here assure you that the atmosphere of this place is fast turning into vapor — a pleasant prospect this if it goes on!

Now, I remember noticing that empty talk is on the increase in the world. Thoughtful men to whom I mentioned the observation believed cheap literature and the so-called education of the masses to be the probable cause.

A strange explanation of the aforenamed phenomenon, is it not? Vanity of speech on the increase — a pleasant prospect truly if it continues! To be sure the world could never do without its talk, but the superabundance is alarming; a new deluge threatens, the spirit is lost in hollow words. The world used to be more simple, I am sure, in olden times; straightforward statements, at any rate, used to be current much more than they are now. Invention in all spheres is on the increase, the invention of pretences remarkably so. One feels inclined at times to call out despairingly: "Words, words, words!" as Hamlet did. I am sure words are the dominant power nowadays in so-called intellectual pursuits; it is not the informing spirit, but the phrase, which is puffed and offered for sale. It has transpired, however, that the genius of talk is prepared to patronize the genius of mind, promising to save it from utter neglect, but the spirit will have none of it, crying: "Let me die rather than be the slave of words!"

Another striking observation has been made here of late — the number of women in hell is on the increase. Now the emptiness of talk is scarcely a sufficient explanation of this fact, but a fact it is. Only half a century ago men used to preponderate by far; at the present moment equality has very nearly been

attained; before long, I doubt not, the fairer sex will outnumber the stronger.

There is a reason for everything, and the cause of the effect in question will appear patent to any one looking about him open-eyed. Education is at fault — that watchword of modern times! We hear much nowadays of woman's right to be educated. Not a doubt of it, and some few I believe manage their own creditable share of culture. It is not of those I would speak, but of the training of girls in a general way. How, indeed, do we educate them? and is their mind, their heart, the better for the teaching they get? Do we bring them to view in nature for instance, or in history, the eternal purpose of beauty and of truth? Are we anxious that they should learn to distinguish between the pure and the impure, the mean and the noble, the paltry and the truly great? that they should seek the ideal in life — ay, their own ideal, the crown of their womanhood? Is it truth, is it love, we teach them? and above all, do we lead them to Him who is truth and love eternal, their God, their Savior?

Do we, I ask? but no, this is not the so-called first-class education our girls get for all their governesses and finishing-masters! Our girls, coming forth from the schoolroom, will jabber their two or three foreign tongues, will rattle away on the piano, or sing a song, and happy are the ears that need not hear it! Our girls, moreover, are found to have a smattering of things in general, enabling them to venture on all sorts of topics concerning which they are profoundly ignorant; our girls are supposed to have acquired style and deportment to boot; the art of dress being neither last nor least. Every fold of their garments assumes a

vital importance; but concerning the bent of their hearts, who takes the trouble to inquire?

It is vanity, and their education a farce. Poor girls! poor women! You are worse off, I say, in these days of culture than you were in the darkest of ages when no one dreamt you needed teaching. In those days you were looked upon as though you had no souls; time righted you, and it was allowed you were not mere puppets. Now you are being varnished over by way of education, till your soul lies encrusted beneath.

The good old times, after all, were best. Our grandmothers were brought up for home duties chiefly, and lesson-books were of the fewest beyond their Bibles and their catechism. Women knew their calling; they accepted it at the hands of God, and were happy in doing their duty. But now — what of it? the clearest notion which girls and, I fear, many women, have of duty nowadays is, that it is a bore.

And what is life, as they take it? Is it not to amuse themselves as long as possible, to play lawn tennis all day and every day, to catch a husband and have sweet little babies — little dears, images of their mother, of course — to be fashionable, shining in society, till old age overtakes them; is not that it? But there remains one thing which is never mentioned — they may die any day and wake up in hell!

Earth, truly, presents a variety of schools preparatory for hell; those which men frequent are bad enough, but those for women — let angels weep!

I went for a walk lately, passing by the gates of hell. Understand me aright; I am not speaking of those awful gates of hell set up in defiance of the Lord of heaven Himself, though they cannot prevail. *They* are in the abyss I have spoken of, which is a far more

dreadful place than this abode of death. I only mean that I passed near the entrance of Hades.

An entrance truly it is, for of your own free will you never get out, wide open though you find it. I cannot tell whether I contemplated anything like an escape: I only know that on approaching a certain boundary line an awful "Stop!" resounded, and I slunk back terrified.

No one, then, passes out, save under dread compulsion; but there is a flocking in continuously. I forget what they say of the death-rate in the world, is it every minute or every second that a human soul goes to eternity? Be it as it may, it is a terrible fact that the greater part of those who die present themselves at these gates of hopelessness. There is not a more appalling sight in all hell than watching this entrance! The space beyond is wrapt in a shadowy mist, out of which lost souls are constantly emerging, singly or in troops, dawning upon your vision. They are all equally naked, differing but in sex and in age. The beggar and the king are not to be known from one another, both arriving in like miserable nakedness. That abject misery is the common mark of unredeemed humanity, set upon all the children of Adam coming hither, no matter what station was theirs in life. They have all come by the same road, broad and pleasant at first, but terrible at its latter end. As they approach the gates they are seized with fear and trembling, and pass them in an agony of despair.

The love of amusement nowadays scarcely stops short of the harassing; men love to feast upon anything that excites their unhealthy fancy. But I assure you I have not sunk to that state of callousness which could look upon the dreadful scene unmoved. "All these are com-

ing to share my misery!" I cried. Say not it was complacency clothed in pity; there was something not altogether mean in my sympathy. I could have wept for them, as I long to weep for myself.

Yet, after all, I felt fascinated by the sight, and tore myself away with difficulty; the picture, I knew, would pursue me into whatever solitude I might plunge.

How rich is life, how full of enjoyment! I see it now where nothing is left to comfort the soul. My life, I too cannot but own, was overflowing with blessings; how many moments I can call to mind that seemed welling over with content!

The sound of a certain bell keeps coming back to my inward ear. I hear it ringing, ringing, and it vibrates through my inmost soul. It is the bell of evensong, to which I loved to listen in days gone by. And as I hear it, the sounds call up a scene of beauty rich with the hues of memory. I see waving cornfields, like sheets of gold between the somber woodlands and the winding stream; I see towering mountains lifting their rocky heights into the burnished colors of the west; I see the sun sinking on the horizon, vanishing in a wealth of roseate sheen. And twilight spreads her wings, a deep holy calm enwrapping nature. I say a holy calm, for the sounds of the ringing bell are burdened with a message of peace to the soul. The smoke ascends from the cottages about, and the incense of prayer arises from many a heart. Those whom love unites gather in unity. The children nestle by their mother's knee awaiting the father returning from work. And when he has come, they close the door upon the outside world, upon the troubles and hardships too that daily life may bring. Or if some cause of care will not be banished, there is

love at hand to deal with it; yea, it helps to nurture that love whose deepest roots are sunk in sorrow.

Would I were that poor laborer returning from the field he tills in the sweat of his brow; or that barefooted youth keeping the cattle on the lea!

The evening bell continues ringing, ringing, to my ear; but the message it carries now is:

"Too late! too late!"

Ah, little bell, my longing is turned to despair!

LETTER XIV.

I REVERT to my childhood. It was the eve of Aunt Betty's birthday. My present had been waiting for ever so long; I gloated over it in secret with distracted feelings; I would not for worlds have betrayed it prematurely, yet I longed to let her guess at the wonderful surprise in store for her. Thus divided in my childish mind I sought her little room in the twilight.

She was not there, and I grew impatient. I must needs look for something to amuse me. But there was nothing that owned the charm of novelty. I gazed about, yawning, when a large moth on the window caught my eye. That called me to action, and, forgetful of all Aunt Betty's pious injunctions to leave God's creatures unmolested, I forthwith set up a chase. Nor was it long before I had caught the hapless insect; it fluttered anxiously, but I held it fast, bent upon examining it, when suddenly Aunt Betty entered. Overtaken in my boyish cruelty, I closed my hand upon the little prisoner, and stood trembling.

Aunt Betty, however, did not seem to notice that I was ill at ease, and turned to me with her usual kindness. I felt very miserable, and conversation would not flow, so she told me a story, her usual device when she thought I needed rousing. Now, whatever her stories might be worth, — and they were not by any means always inventions of genius, — they were sure to culminate in some sort of moral which never failed to impress me. Aunt Betty's story on this occasion led up to the statement — God see thee!

The words fell on me like judgment; involuntarily I hid my hand behind my back, my heart beating, ready to burst.

"You must know, darling," Aunt Betty went on unconsciously, "that God sits upon His holy throne, an angel on His right hand, and another on His left, each having a book before him. And the angel to the right marks down all the good, however little or weak, which man strives to do while he lives on earth; that angel is always smiling a heavenly smile. But the angel on the left is full of weeping, as he notes down the evil deeds of men. And at the last day, when the great reckoning has come, a voice is heard from the throne — "Give up the books!" And then our deeds are examined; if there is more evil than good, and we have not repented of it humbly, and received forgiveness of sin, it will go ill with us! We shall be forever wailing in the evil place."

This ending of auntie's story troubled me greatly. I pressed my hands together closer and closer, feeling at the same time as though a live coal were burning my palm. It was conscience which burned. The poor moth must have been dead long before, yet I felt as though it were still fluttering within my grasp, trying to free itself from the unkind hold. "God seeth all things," said auntie; "and we must answer to Him for all our deeds at the last day!" Self-control was at an end; a flood of tears came to the rescue; and, unable to say as single word, I held out my hand to Aunt Betty, the crushed moth witnessing against me.

She understood at once, and drawing me to her heart she first pointed to the wrong of cruelty; but added her own sweet words of consolation, that God would forgive me if my tears could tell Him I was sorry. But

AND THEN SHE TOLD ME ANOTHER STORY

I was not able at once to grasp this assurance, sobbing piteously. Never was there anything more tender, more full of love, than Aunt Betty's ways when comfort was needed. And presently she made me kneel down and ask God to forgive me. It was she who prayed, I repeating the words after her. But they came from my heart, and never was there more sincere repentance.

And then she told me another story, and that story, too, must have its moral. Pressing me close to her heart she exhorted me to look to God in all my doings, and turn to Him in prayer my life long. Whenever I had done anything amiss I should tell Him so with a contrite heart, begging Him to forgive me, and promising Him sincerely that I would try not to do so again. Then the Lord God would pity me in His mercy, and I need not fear the dreadful book.

As for the poor moth, we buried it sorrowfully in one of auntie's flower-pots. We gave it a coffin of rose leaves, so that the mangled corpse need not be touched by the covering earth.

My heart was light again when I left the little room. But all that night I was troubled in dreams. Again and again I heard the dreadful words, "Give up the books!" And, waking, I sat up in bed to find myself in the dark. I had never known before what it was to be afraid of the dark; now I knew.

The following morning, as soon as I was dressed, I ran to Aunt Betty's door, finding it locked contrary to habit. "It is me, auntie!" I cried, and was admitted directly. But I stood still, amazed; the tears ran down Aunt Betty's face. On the table before her there was the most marvellous array of queer old things, which I did not remember ever having seen. Indeed, such

was my amazement and, I must add, my grief, that I forgot all about the precious present I had come to deliver. My first clear idea was that Aunt Betty too perchance might have crushed a moth; but a brighter thought supervened. "Auntie," I whispered, pressing close to her, "didn't you say last night that God seeth all things? Does He see you are crying?"

Aunty Betty started, a flood of light illumining her features:

"Yes, darling," she said, "thank you! He does know all things and He knows my tears; it is very wrong of me to forget it. He does not only know them, but He counts them!"

And quickly she dried them, showing me her own old smiling face.

"Can you not see, my child, how the Lord has wiped them away? He needs but look upon poor human eyes and they cease crying."

"But why did you cry, auntie?"

"That is more than you could understand, dearie. I am forty years old this day, but why need I cry? why should I, even if I were an old maid of sixty or eighty? ay, and if He will have me live till I am a hundred, I will not murmur. Come and sit down by me, that I may talk to you." And she began:

"Years ago, my child, there was a young girl as pretty as she was foolish. She believed the world to be indescribably beautiful, and that all its glories were waiting to be showered into her lap. There was no harm in this illusion in itself; but it was hurtful because altogether untrue. The world is not meant to be so delightful to any of us. The girl herself was really pretty, and when people told her so, she would cast down her

eyes, feeling as though she must sink into the ground for shyness.

"There was one especially who told her so times without number. And he was beautiful without a doubt — strong, manly, and winning. He was a sailor. It was a time of war, and he commanded a privateer.

"She loved him dearly, with all her heart. There was a ball one day — do you know what a ball is? It is a queer thing — a mixture of angelic delight and devilish invention. One is carried along, floating, as it were, in the airy spaces between heaven and earth and hell — at least *I* think so. . . . Well, when the ball was over he entreated her for one of her gloves. There was nothing she could have refused him at that moment, I believe. He had it — and here you see its fellow!"

And she showed me number one of her relics — an ancient kid glove.

"But the young girl's parents said he was an adventurer and not fit to marry into a respectable family. That was her first grief. Still he had her heart; she said she would never love another, and they were permitted at last to be engaged to one another. This is the ring he gave her!

"Now she swam in happiness. One voice only in all the universe had power over her heart, and that voice was his. It might have been true that he was not without many and grave faults, but she loved him just as he was. He might have sunk lower and lower, I believe she would have loved him still. For, once the heart has been given away truly — but that is more than you can understand. Well, he went to sea, and returned. It was a splendid vessel which he commanded, the "Viking," they called it. One capture after an-

other he made, and grew rich upon the prizes taken. But people said money never remained with him; he was careless of it, and prone to gambling. This is the ship!"

She showed me a little picture representing a schooner skimming over the bluest of seas.

"His absence sometimes was long. But they exchanged letters whenever opportunity offered — such letters! All her soul was in hers. And as for his — well, here they are!"

She pointed to a packet of faded letters, carefully tied together with a once rose-colored ribbon.

"And then there came a time when news ceased. What she felt and suffered in those sad days I cannot tell you. At last she heard again. He was ill — the letter said — very ill in a foreign seaport. Winter was approaching, but she would not be deterred. Taking her trusted maid with her, she set out upon the journey, and found him in misery. He had been wounded in a duel — what that is you need not know, but here is the bullet!

"She nursed him and he recovered; she freed him from his liabilities, paying all his debts. Full of contrition, and with a new heart apparently, he returned with her; his promises satisfied her and her family. He would give up privateering, and take the command of a merchantman instead. She should go with him as his wife.

"Once more they were to separate and then be united for life. He went to visit his relations and settle his affairs.

"The weeks passed, the wedding-day approached. Happy hour that should crown her hopes, heal her griefs, and reward her for all past suffering! The wed-

ding-dress was ready. This is the wreath — do you know the bridal blossoms? Poor wreath, it is faded now and shrivelled, but it will last, I think, while two eyes are left to look upon it fondly, for the sake of the love that came and went.

"There was another letter. He had set out to join her, but turned half-way, never to see her again. Here is that saddest of letters; what tears it cost her — what pangs — to answer it!

"Was he wicked? I do not think so, but very heedless. He had surrounded himself with difficulties, and there was but one way out of them: one heart must be broken. His uncle, who adopted him, had a daughter — God bless her! He had engaged himself twice over; men, I fear, can do such things. He could redeem his pledge to one only. He did his duty by her, who perhaps had suffered most for him, and who — but let that pass. They say that he settled down and made her a good husband. I trust the Lord has forgiven him the sins of his youth.

"But for that other one, who gladly would have sacrificed her all for his sake, happiness was dead and gone, her beauty fading with her hopes. She grew old, and people began to find her plain. She had nothing left to live for — in herself I mean — so she lived for others. The world is bad, but men need sympathy; *they* are not all bad, but many are unhappy, suffering, and poor. The old maid has found comfort in God, her Lord and Savior."

She stopped, and carefully set herself to pack up her treasures.

And that accomplished, she turned to me smiling:

"I have done for a year!" she said; "let us think of breakfast now."

I, of course, had not taken in the meaning of her story, nor was there any need. She had felt a longing to unburden herself to human ears; she had done so, but her secret was hers.

Now I remember her words, understanding them as I did not then; I am able to enter into her feelings now — those feelings of her fortieth birthday, when she, the so-called old maid, poured out her heart to the child.

At dinner Aunt Betty appeared unusually gay, making the funniest little speeches, and keeping us in the best of humor all that day.

But those words of hers, "God seeth thee," would return to me often, even in later years. They had been words of comfort to my pious old aunt; to me they sounded as the trumpets of judgment, so different was I from her! And then the time came when I learnt to disregard those words entirely — when it was nothing to me to crush many a creature of God's making, that because of my touch never would lift wing again.

To pass the time seems to be one of the chief objects in life, and how to pass it a question on which the most ingenious inventions have been brought to bear. Whether the wickedness or the folly of the endeavor is the more deplorable is difficult to say. There are few phrases showing the perversity of the world more fully than this current expression, *to pass the time!* Time and life are inseparable; men want to live; they consequently try to pass away the time, and yet it is time which yields the fullness of existence, be it in sorrow or in joy. To pass the time is considered to live; but at the end of time stands Death, with hour-glass and sickle, waiting for the last grains to run out.

Passing the time, then, may be tantamount to slow self-murder. Men are anxious to pass it away as though it were a frightful monster — an enemy to life and its enjoyment — never thinking that the real enemy may be coming when time has vanished. If people would but understand that time is their most precious gift — a grace of heavenly fullness — and that all the treasures of the East can never make up for a day wasted, for an hour lost! And if a single hour may be so rich in blessing, what then must time itself be worth, lying before us as a shoreless ocean? But the entire blessedness of the gift will come to the believing heart only in the kingdom to come, where Love rules which made the time.

In hell, where everything is seen in its own true light, the passing of time, or rather time passed, assumes an awful significance; for truth and reality are upon us. It was time which, for us also, included the largess of life — the manifold blessings shed abroad by the hand of God. Time is past now, and hope has fled. Ay, we ourselves are thrust out of it, never to enter again; time for us has vanished, leaving existence behind.

One of the great sources of amusement on earth for the beguiling of dull time is the theater. Well, we too have a theater, though time with us needs no more whiling away. Old habit only is its *raison d'être.* Women need something here to incite their fancy, men something to meet their craving — not to mention the question of food for fashionable conversation. There is no weather here to be talked about, so we must fall back upon the theater.

Acting with us is carried out in a magnificent if peculiar style, the like of which is not possible in the

world, not even in Paris, that theater of theaters. True, we are poor in dramatic works, for not many plays of poet's invention are so glaringly immoral that they are fit for hell; the greater number being vapid rather than wicked, no one cares for them here. But we have resources outdoing anything dreamt of by stage managers upon earth; for we nearly always act life — real occurrences that is — the actors being the very perpetrators of the things set in scene. That is to say, they commit over again on hell's stage the deeds of their earthly life. The theater-going public with us then do not feed upon imagination, but on flat reality, the child of illusion.

Of stage managers there is no lack here, but theirs is no enviable task. It needs their utmost exertion to outdo one another in producing things horrible or piquant; for people here also desire to be tickled, *blasé* though they be. So the harassed manager rushes about seeking for some spicy occurrence, some sensational wickedness; and having got it, he must look for the men and women who did it, though they be roaming in the farthermost places of hell. Find them he must, and having found them, there is no help for them; they must play their part.

Let me give an example. There is a piece which made a great hit here lately, called the "Jewel Robbery," a most satanic mixture of seduction, murder and theft. A handsome woman, good-natured, but silly, is intentionally led astray, as a means only; the object being a famous robbery, necessitating two frightful murders besides. A piece full of the most unwholesome effect, you see, and not invented by exaggerating playwright's fancy; but a reproduction, in all minutest details even, of horrible facts. The daily papers were

full of it at the time. They are all here who were mixed up in it, continuing to play the part that brought them hither. You will understand from this that we could not act virtuous pieces even if the audience desired them; the needful actors not being procurable!

Our theater, nevertheless, plainly has the advantage, since real murderers, villains, and profligates are here to take their parts, and all the pieces given are scenes of actual life; our *dramatis personæ,* then, though forced to play, do so with singular vivacity and truthfulness. If good people are required, by way of dupes and victims, we fall back upon hypocrites who delight in the opportunity of showing forth their special talents, and indeed they manage their assumed character very cleverly.

Moral laws naturally are quite out of the question; there is no eventual victory of goodness, nor need the triumph of wickedness be sustained. Play-acting in hell is quite independent of rules, either moral or dramatic, pieces simply being carried to the point they reached in life.

The scenery is unrivalled,— illusion of course, but the illusion is perfect. It is quite within our power to imagine any place, the surroundings of the original plot, mere jugglery, but appearing most real. These scenes sometimes are wonderfully impressive, many a spectator, at the unexpected sight of well-known places, falling a prey to hopeless longing.

Effective, then, as these representations are, they are a torment alike to actor and audience. In this also we are driven to own the one law paramount that makes inclination here a terrible compulsion — not leaving so much as a desire even that it might be otherwise.

LETTER XV.

SHOULD the idea present itself to you to publish these letters, you have my full permission for doing so — not that I write them with this view primarily. And people very likely will doubt their genuineness. "Even supposing souls in hell to be able to write letters," they will say, "how should their missives reach the upper world?"

People are strangely inconsistent. The man lives not who has not heard of spirits and ghosts, while a great many actually believe in supernatural appearances. Now supposing there are ghosts, why should not ghost letters be conceivable? And what more natural than to imagine that some restless spirit, permitted to revisit former scenes, should somehow mediate such communication?

Such is indeed the fact in the present case. Count the letters you have had from me, and be sure that so many ghosts have been to your dwelling. Do not be horrified! I do not entrust my confessions to *any* wandering soul, but only to respectable spirits. Indeed, if the natural shrinking of mortal man were not in your way, you might find some of them worth the knowing. In any case I pledge them to polite behavior, that they shall nowise harass you, but do their errand unseen. Not all ghosts have a character for worrying mortals; some, on the contrary, are exceedingly trustworthy, and could be sent anywhere.

Be it known to you, then, that whenever you find yourself possessed of fresh news from me, some ghost

has been to your house that night. Did you not find a letter beneath your desk lately — on the floor I mean? This is how it was. On leaving off writing the evening before, you left your pen and pencil crosswise on the table — quite by accident, I dare say; but my messenger, on perceiving the holy sign, was seized with such a fit of trembling that he dropped the letter and sped away. And while I am about it, I would ask you to get rid of the supernumerary cocks in your farmyard; the piercing call of the bird of dawn may be all very well in your ears, but to us it bears a terrible warning, reminding us of a day to come, the day of resurrection and final doom, which we know must come, however distant it be.

My handwriting I dare say is not very legible; I hope you will excuse it. There is not a pen to be had here but what has been worn out in the service of falsehood or injustice. The paper too is wretched. I could find nothing but some old documents to serve the purpose, and upon examining them more closely I do believe they are nothing less than the false decretals of 853 — nice material to write on! As for ink, alas, my friend, what should you say if it were my very heart-blood I write with? It is black enough no doubt!

I need not tell you that my letters will not bear keeping. They fade away in daylight. You can only preserve their contents by copying them on the spot.

This present letter I intend forwarding to you by the hand of a remarkable personage — one of the many interesting acquaintances I have made here — who is about to revisit the earth. He is one of the famous knights of Charles the Bold, who met their death by the brave lances of the Swiss at the battle of Murten.

Proud and noble is his bearing, and he goes fully armed, from the spur on his heel to the plume on his helmet; but the spurs do not clink, and the plume will not wave. He carefully keeps his visor closed, so that I have no knowledge of his face, although I seem to know him intimately from his conversation. I believe he feels ashamed. He cannot forget that he, the famous champion, renowned for many a victorious encounter, met his death by the hand of an ordinary peasant.

It is the consciousness of his high dignity which prevents him from mixing freely with people. He lives like a hermit almost, immured in his own pride. It was mere accident that gained me his notice. I was delivering a panegyric in some public locality concerning the merits of the wine of Beaune, stating that I had drunk it on the spot. When the company had dispersed I found myself alone with him of the armor.

"You have been to Burgundy?" he queried, hollow-voiced.

"I have, sir."

"And to Beaune, near Dijon?"

"I have, sir knight."

"Côte d'or, thou glorious, never-to-be-forgotten country!" he murmured, beneath the visor. And turning upon his heel he left me to my cogitations.

That was the beginning of our acquaintance; I met him again, and he appeared to take to me. He gave me many a glowing description of the splendor surrounding Charles the Bold, of his glorious army, of the great future then apparently in store for Burgundy, of the battles and tournaments that had enriched him with trophies. But he never mentioned either Granson or Murten. On the other hand, he was anxious to learn

A REMARKABLE PERSONAGE

from me the present condition of the once famous Burgundy, the power and exploits of France, the modern perfections of the art of war, and the tactics of battles. He could listen to me for hours.

But what interested him most, and gained me his confidence fully, was my telling him about my sojourn in the Cevennes, and the days I spent in exploring the charming hill-range deserving so fully its appellation of Côte d'or. Never enough of detail could I give him concerning my knowledge of those scenes of beauty. He would guide me, putting question upon question; but it was as if one question kept hovering on his lips which he dared not ask. My recollections brought me at last to Castle Roux. He started visibly as I named it, and grew silent, waiting breathlessly for what I might volunteer.

Much might be said concerning that castle. It is a mountain fastness of ancient date, modern times having restored it in fanciful style; its owner being proud of it as of a relic of antiquity, and inhabiting it for several months in the year. The family is old, but the original title of Roux has yielded to another name well known in the annals of France.

The old castle, interesting in itself, is rich in curiosities besides. I gave an account of all that might be seen within the venerable walls, describing the labyrinthine passages, the queer, old, winding-stairs leading to all sorts of secret places, the lofty battlements commanding a view of the fertile tracts round about; I spoke of the dismal keeps hewn into the rock, where hapless prisoners for years might dream of the vanished daylight; I mentioned the armory and the great hall filled with the cognizances of knighthood. In short I took my visored friend right through the cas-

tle, one door only remaining closed to my roaming description, that of the so-called red chamber which I myself had not entered. I had been told that never mortal foot should cross its threshold again. Centuries ago something terrible had happened in that room — what? I could not learn. The old steward, who acted as my guide on the occasion of my visit, communicative as he was in a general way, was most reserved concerning the past history of the family, but some account had been given me in the little village inn where I spent a couple of nights, and it clung to memory.

Concerning the secret chamber no one seemed to know anything, but I learned a wonderful story of the so-called "Cold Hand." Whenever the head of the family for the time being — so the tale ran — is about to commit some act detrimental to the honor or welfare of the house, he is warned at the decisive moment by the touch of a cold hand. At the very moment he stretches forth his own hand, be it in friendship or in enmity, an icy hand, invisible, is laid — not always upon his hand — sometimes on his cheek, on his neck, or upon the crown of his head. Through centuries and up to the present time the "cold hand" in this manner has swayed the fortunes of the family. The influence was experienced last when the late owner, who died but recently, was about to tie the nuptial knot. The festive company was gathered in the great hall; he had just taken hold of the pen to sign the marriage-contract, when the icy touch of a cold hand closed upon his fingers. He staggered, turned white as a corpse, and dropped the pen. Neither prayer nor menace could prevail with him to make him fulfil his engagement; the wedding never took place.

I concluded by saying that it remained, of course, with the hearer to credit the story; some believed such family traditions — some did not; one could but form one's own opinion.

The visored knight, however, did not appear to think there were two ideas about it. His head shook slowly, and the hollow voice made answer:

"It is true, man, every word of it. I am the last Count of Roux! . . . I am the Cold Hand!"

I shrunk back terrified and stood trembling, for so powerful are the instincts of mortal life that they cleave to us still: why should one shrink from a fellow-ghost in hell, where all hands are cold?

The Count stood groaning.

"Hear me," he said; "I will tell you my story."

I could but listen, and he began:

"I have never yet discovered what cause brought me to this place of punishment, unless it be the fact that overmuch piety governed me in life. I was ruled by the priests, body and soul, and obeyed their behests blindly.

"Some centuries ago a colony from Provence had settled in the valleys of the Cevennes; they were quiet people, and patterns of diligence, the neighborhood indeed had only gained by their presence. Peaceful and harmless, they seemed glad of the retreat they had found. But then they were heretics, forming a religious community, a remnant of the Albigenses in fact. At first they kept their creed to themselves; but by degrees, feeling settled in their new home, they confessed their heresies openly, attempting even to gain others to their views. They claimed the right of every Christian to read the Bible for himself; and repudiated anything that was not in keeping with the Scriptures

and the teaching of the Apostles. That was dangerous doctrine, and could not fail to call forth the resistance of the clergy. The struggle reached its height about the time I entered upon manhood. As an obedient son of the Church I closed my eyes to harm accruing to myself, and drove them mercilessly from my dominion. It was a crusade in small, a repetition of Albigensian persecution. The third part of my county was laid waste; devastation reigned where thrift and wealth had flourished, and I myself had done it. Nothing but the assurance that so dire a sacrifice would gain me a high place in heaven could uphold me through the pangs of loss, and the priests did their best to strengthen my belief.

"And yet I lived to rue it. The Church for which I had done so much would not do anything for me, at least not what I wanted. I wished to marry the lovely Lady Cyrille de Breville, but was refused dispensation because she was a distant cousin. Endless were the difficulties, the humiliations I underwent. Entreaty, menace, promise of money availed not. My gracious Liege interfered; it was in vain. I myself went on a pilgrimage to Rome. Two years had been spent in mortifying endeavor when at last I gained my end.

"Indeed, had it been in my power to recall the Albigenses, I would have done it, so wroth was I.

"Cyrille then became my wife, doubly dear for the battle that had won her, and for the faithful endurance with which she clave to me. For I had had a dangerous rival in the Count of Tournailles. There stood nothing in the way of a marriage with him; but she had preferred to wait till I could lead her to the altar. For some five or six years I was in a heaven of bliss. Our union had been blessed with two children, a boy

and a girl. What so few can say, we could: our happiness was complete. Then the time came when Duke Charles called his vassals to arms. Knighthood loved to obey, but it was a wrench to affection. I went.

"You know the history of that unfortunate war; how, having conquered Lorraine, we faced the Swiss. Granson, Murten — terrible names! It is a mystery to me to this day how it came about; I doubt not that unearthly powers interfered. I fell at Murten, and lifting my eyes again found myself here.

"I, who had built upon the assurance of having a place in heaven, to be thrust into hell by the hand of a low-born churl! I shall never get over the disgrace. And my loving wife, my darling children — stronger than the feeling of shame was the longing for them. It drove me back to earth, a restless, wandering soul.

"Never shall I forget that first spirit journey in mist and darkness. I drew near my own old home, a stranger, an outcast, sick and lonely at heart: feeling as those must feel who in the dead of night follow the ways of sin. Every noise made me tremble; I shuddered at the falling leaf. It was agony. Why did I not turn on my path and hie me back to hell? You well may ask — but I was driven onward, a terrible constraint upon me. Slowly I went from place to place, every well-known spot adding its individual pain; I drank the dregs of memory. At last I reached the castle, on which the fitful moonlight cast a spectral glimmer.

"What a change? Surely I was the same I had always been, but there was something that made me feel a stranger to myself! Oh for tears to weep! I spurned them in the days of life, but now, what would I not have given for a healing tear? Vainest long-

ing! I stood and trembled, horror-struck as at the sight of ghost; yet I myself was the ghost — let others fear! Was ever such a reception! The wind moaned in tree-tops, doors creaked, shadows glided through passages — I stood listening; the dogs whined, the cattle were restless, my once favored charger moved uneasily in his stall.

"As a thief I entered my own castle, stole up the staircase, and passed noiselessly from room to room. But the place felt forsaken, empty, and cold. My children, I must see them first. I found them in the sweet sleep of innocence, cradled in health and beauty. Never till that moment had I known the despair of love. My eyes beheld them, life of my life, yet mine no more. I longed to embrace them, press them to my heart, but dared not — simply dared not. I could but groan and hie me away.

"On I went, the well-known way, to my own old chamber with the nuptial couch. That room is locked now and never entered by mortal foot — the room of the mystery. Overpowered with feelings unutterable, I lingered on the threshold, so near to seeing her again, *her!*

"And I saw her — asleep in the arms of another, the arms of my former rival, the Count of Tournailles. I stood for a moment, rooted to the ground. How beautiful she was — beautiful as ever. But oh, the depth of torment! I, to whom her love had been pledged for ever and aye, forgotten, betrayed! 'Hapless woman!' I groaned, 'is it thus thou keepest thy vow? is it thus thou art loyal to my memory?'

"I stood clenching my fists in helpless rage, and gnashing my teeth. What could I do? Let me wake her at least; she shall see me! And stretching forth

my hand across the well-known bed, I laid it upon her uncovered shoulder. She started at the icy touch; she saw me; I must have offered an awful sight, for she gave a scream rousing echoes of horror, and lay fainting on the pillow. I vanished.

"But my wrath was boundless. From that hour I persecuted her ruthlessly; when she expected it least the touch of my hand was upon her. She never saw me again, but I think that made my presence all the more horrible to her. At night especially I would be near her, watching that never again she might rest in his arms. My cold hand, forbidding, was between them. They went about like ghosts themselves, worn and harassed; the grave seemed yawning to receive them. The time came when they could not bear it any longer, and resolved to separate. She entered a cloister, and there my hand was powerless. In that peaceful retreat her child was born, and from him are descended the present owners of Castle Roux.

"My own children drooped and died. That was the last great sorrow touching me in the upper world. I stood by their bier. That turned my heart; I felt something like regret; perhaps after all I had been too hard upon her. A dead husband is no husband, and has nothing to claim; whereas she was in the fullness of life, young and fitted for joy, owing duty to nature and to the world. In voluntary penance I resolved henceforth to watch over Cyrille's son, and his children's children after him. It was a sacred vow, and I have kept it since. This, then, is the 'cold hand of Roux.' An unmistakable presentiment, akin to direct revelation, informs me of any hurtful step a member of the family may be about to take; and then I cannot rest in hell, but am driven back to the world to interfere

at the decisive moment. With few exceptions, every scion of the family, man or woman, has felt my hand; and it will be so till the last of them has been gathered to his fathers.

"At the present moment the call is again upon me, urging me to revisit the land of the living. What it is that requires my presence I cannot tell; but I know my time, and the cold hand will never fail of its mission."

Thus spoke the Count; and having finished, he fell a prey to silence, leaving me to myself. I expect to meet him again, and doubt not that he will take charge of this letter. But thou, my friend, hast nothing to fear from the cold hand of Roux.

You cannot ask me, but the question would seem natural: "Will you not return to earth yourself? if others are coming, why not you?" I hardly know what to say. It is not an impossible thought that I too might be driven some day to revisit the upper world. I say driven, for no one goes unless urged by an inward necessity — unmistakable and irresistible. Should the compelling need at any time lay hold of me, I should have no choice but to go. I trust it may never be, for it would be adding new pangs to the misery I endure. I expect that the author of that need is none but Satan himself; for surely the Lord in heaven has nothing to do with it. The bare thought of such a possibility brings back all the horrors of death, and hope cries out, Let me never quit hell!

Stop and consider the awful poverty of hope that has nothing left but this!

LETTER XVI.

In Italy the glories of nature reach their perfection at eve. My mother not being much of a walker, Lily and I would stroll about by ourselves. Venice, Florence, Naples,— enchanting memories! Not now, I mean, but in the days of life.

Those Italian evenings were an indescribable mixture of beauty and delight; nature a very cradle of peace — and peace speaking to my soul. For I had Lily with me; and no matter what scenes of humanity might surround us, she and I seemed alone at such moments.

The most perfect delights I tasted at Florence. We visited the Piazza del Gran Duca, the center of life in that city. Surrounded by magnificent buildings, the place radiant with light, you feel as though you had entered some lordly hall, gigantic in size, and of royal splendor, roofed over by the starry sky.

Here you see that ancient palace, with its grand mediæval tower, which has looked down upon many a stormy gathering in the days of the republic, upon Dante too, Michael Angelo, Savonarola. In front of it are two colossal statues — David and Hercules. Not far distant — on the very spot, tradition says, where Savonarola suffered death on the pyre,— a fountain sends up her sparkling jets, guarded by Tritons and Fauns, and surmounted by a figure of Neptune, the ruler of seas. Again, a little farther, stands the equestrian statue of Cosmo di Medici, cast in bronze, a master-work by Giambologna. On the opposite side a

flight of steps, presided over by a pair of antique lions, leads you into the glorious Loggia dei Lanzi. Here, by the light of lamps, you behold some of Italy's noblest treasures of art — Perseus, the Deliverer, by Benvenuto Cellini; Judith and Holofernes; Hercules and the Centaur; the famous marble group by Giambologna, representing the Rape of the Sabines; and Ajax, with the dying Patroclus in his arms. In the background you see a number of Vestals of more than human size. These statues, seemingly alive and breathing in the magic light, cast over you a wondrous spell, holding you transfixed. The fact that a collection of such priceless works of art can be open to the public freely — entrusted to that instinctive reverence for things beautiful to which the lowest even . . . .

But fool that I am, going off into æsthetics! Am I not in hell! Nay, laugh not, but pity me, for I could not join in your merriment.

So great is the power of memory; it is upon me, dragging me back to scenes long dead and gone. Memories? what are they but my life — my all! But they are bare of enjoyment; they are as a cup of poison that will not kill, but which fills you with horror and unutterable despair.

It was with a deep inward joy, lifting us as it were to that height where reality and enchantment meet, that Lily and I moved slowly through that hall of art. We hardly spoke. And when satisfaction for the moment had her fill, we escaped to the dimly-lit arcades of the Palazzo degli Uffizi. There words would come; the charm was broken, though its spell remained. How much we had to say to one another; how sweet, how tender was Lily's trustful voice! As her arm rested on mine I seemed to hear the very beat of her

heart. And what delight to me to open her mind to the treasures she had seen, to rouse new feelings of beauty in that waking soul, so responsive and so pure!

When the shadows of night had deepened, we would return home, passing the stately cathedral. Stillness had settled, spreading wings of peace. Maria del Fiore they call this church, and truly it is a fitting name. Florence means the flowering city, and this sacred pile is a very blossom of beauty in her midst. It needed one hundred and sixty years for the cathedral's stately growth. Her cupola overlooks not only the whole of the town, but the whole of the radiant valley; the splendid belfry, rich in sculpture, lifting its graceful front to a height of three hundred feet. Not far from it stands that ancient baptistry, with its wondrous gate of bronze, which, as Michael Angelo said, was worthy of being the gate of Paradise. In front of it there is a rough-hewn stone bench. There Lily would often rest when tired by our wanderings. There Dante had sat, dreaming about Paradise and hell, and thinking of Beatrice.

One evening I asked Lily which part of the city pleased her best.

"The Piazza is very beautiful," she said; "but after all it is a far-off sort of beauty, carrying one back to heathen times; here I feel at home, the very stones breathing Christianity. The difference is very strange; at this place the living faith takes hold of me that, roam where you will in the world, you must return to the Lord for content. The world with all its glory cannot satisfy us as He can."

"Ah, Lily, would I could believe like you!" I cried involuntarily, pressing her hand till it must have pained her — I scarcely knew it.

Suppressing an exclamation she looked at me with earnest surprise, saying uneasily:

"Oh, Philip, don't! as compared to you I am but an ignorant child."

"Yes, Lily, but your childlike heart is the treasure I envy. Is it not an old blessed truth that to children is given what is hidden from the wise? Perhaps you can answer me a question, Lily; it may be all plain to you, though many of the great and learned make it a bewildering riddle. What is being a Christian?"

"Dear Philip, what should it be but having Christ in your heart."

These words of hers cut me to the soul. How often had I felt that it was Satan, or at least an evil spirit that dwelt in me.

"Yes," said Lily, as if to herself in quiet rapture, "that is it — so simple, and yet so great. Him alone I desire, and, having Him, I have father and mother and all the world. He makes His abode with me that in Him I may live and move, and have my being. He alone is my Saviour, my Lord, my all." And softly she added after a while: "Lord Christ, let me be true to thee, till thou take me home!"

A deep silence followed. The memories of childhood pressed around me, as if wrestling for my heart. I was moved — unutterably moved. I felt as though the tears were rising to my eyes, and, hushing all other feelings, the one thought took shape: She is the angel that is to lead thee back to God.

"But, dearest Philip," said Lily, after a long pause, "that question could not have come from your heart; I do not understand you."

I made some reply, scarcely knowing what I said. I felt her arm trembling within mine; she stopped short;

we were standing in front of one of those little madonnas, illumined by a lamp.

"Let me look you in the face," she said. "I felt as if some stranger were speaking to me. . . . No, I am sure; it is your own self — you could never change!"

And she laughed at her own foolish fancy, as she called it.

Lily's laughter, at any time as brightest music to my ears, broke the evil spell. I felt light-hearted again, the shadows had vanished before the health-giving sun.

"Never to you!" I cried, drawing her close, "and you are my own little friend, so good, so true, intended to be a blessing to me in life and in death!"

I have met her again, I have met Annie! She sat apart, strangely occupied. Her long hair fell about her; she was taking little shells and bits of reeds out of the dripping tresses. Her slight garment had slipped from her shoulder. Oh, horror! I saw the brand of shame disfiguring the snowy skin. It was a mark red as blood, and the conscience of blood-guiltiness raised its voice in my soul.

As an open page her heart lay revealed to my sight. Shame and despair dwelt therein. But her life's history was not written there. Her face, once so lovely, now so degraded, bore the traces of it; and with the brand upon her shoulder ended the terrible account. Her fault, at first, was but this, that she loved me too fondly, trusted me too foolishly. It was I who had wronged her, ruined her in return for that love. She had perished in the torrent of sin, carried from shame to shame, from despair to despair, sinking at last in a

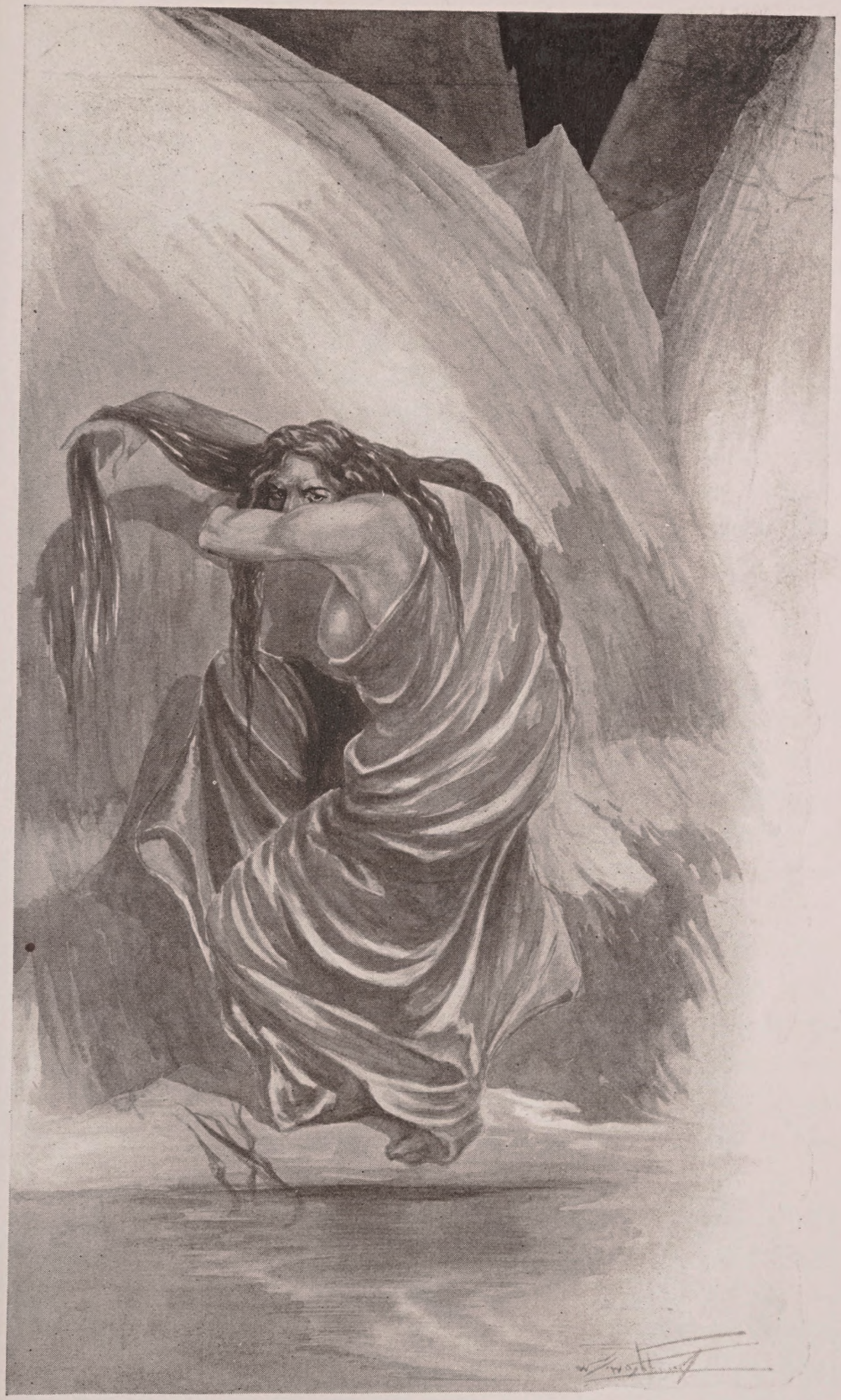
watery grave. The knowledge of it was as a fire consuming my heart.

I stood gazing, unable to turn away my eyes, though the sight should kill me. But suddenly I felt as if my soul were rent asunder; light, as a bursting flame, flashed through me, leaving me trembling, a chill chasing the glow. A horrible thought had possessed me! Those features — of whom did they remind me? Fearful conviction, Martin resembled Annie — was as like her as a son may be like his mother! Had not Martin's mother, moreover, been a strolling actress, who had drowned herself? And Martin's secret — that secret which should make all plain between us — reconcile us,— was this it? Yes, yes, I could not doubt!

Then Martin was her child — and mine! And I had ruined not only her, but him, my child, my son! This, then, was the reason why the boy had fascinated me so strangely. I had seen myself in him. That is why I had loved him — to passion almost — in spite of his wild and wayward temper! This wild — ay, evil nature was my own. It was thus that God punished me in him. Is it not written that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation? It is terrible. And the worst is this — not the mother only, but my own child! The night of madness is not known in hell, else that hour must have plunged me into it.

But the doubt remained. I must have it solved at any cost. I hastened towards her. But she, at my first movement lifted her eyes, saw me, and fled, horror winging her feet. She was gone.

"O for mountains to cover me, to hide me!" I wailed in anguish; but there is no hiding in hell, not a



ONCE SO LOVELY, NOW SO DEGRADED

corner where in unseen solitude one might wrestle with one's grief.

I have never yet succeeded in writing a letter at one sitting. I take pen and paper as the longing seizes me, and jot down what specially occupies my mind — the thoughts that assail it; then turn away, to continue some other time at longer or shorter interval. I never write unless some inward necessity prompts me; yet if I did not somehow court that necessity, I do not think I ever should write. This will partly explain why these letters are no continuous account, but broken pictures only — a true mirror of myself, who am but a wreck now, shattered and undone.

I remember that of all days I disliked Sunday most; on that day I used to dine at my mother's, and, what I thought worse, was expected to accompany her to church. I say worse, not because I disliked hearing sermons, but because I was never sure that some word might not rouse unpleasant sensations within me, followed by thoughts which I preferred keeping in memory's tomb, rather than let them run riot with fear and regret. In the hubbub of daily life it was easy to keep down serious thoughts; but on Sundays and at church they would be heard, making me feel that I had missed my true destiny, that I was not what I should have been. What was the use of such thoughts, since no man can undo his past?

But worst of all were Communion Sundays, for my mother would have me attend. She was so very careful of proprieties, and I did not like to grieve her; so I went, feeling all the time as though I were being dragged to the pillory. Bad as I was, I was no scoffer;

I felt there was something holy, and that I had no part in it. I would far rather not have partaken. The service was positively painful to me. I tried to go through it unconcerned; but this was a case of the spirit being stronger than the flesh. I knew what I was about! It took me several days to get over the uneasiness created in my mind; I would shake off impressions — find myself again, as I called it — in a whirl of amusement.

The memory of one of these Sundays is present with me; and why? I see a slender girl in the bloom of youth, her beauty transfigured to something of unearthly luster, uplifted to the spiritual. I see her; the fair head drooping, the silky wealth of her hair falling about her as a veil. Hers is a higher loveliness than mere regularity of features, and there is that in her eye which keeps you a prisoner to something above, beyond. That deep gaze of hers is all worship, all adoration: it is herself, her soul. But there is more; that smile of hers is as a ray of light; you cannot tell whether it hovers on her lips merely or shines from her eyes; it is there, as a beam from heaven lighting up her face.

That was Lily in her sixteenth year; she too is about to take the sacrament. She does not do so lightly — I judge from the blushes on her face, from the heaving of her tender form. Yes; she too is uneasy, approaching tremblingly; but how different from me! It was her first communion.

I had risen early against my wont; the disquietude of my mind would not let me rest; somehow my heart would beat. I set about dressing — what evil-doer was that looking at me from the glass! I was quite unhinged, and hastened downstairs. In the breakfast-room I met Lily; she was alone and rather pale.

"What is it, my child?" I said; "are you not well?"

She smiled. Ah! that smile, it used to be my heaven. But woe is me that I thought not of a higher heaven, for now I am left desolate of either.

"Yes, quite well," she said gently. And she went to fetch my mother.

I stood lost in thought. The evident emotion in which I had surprised her was a riddle to be solved. It was always a delight to me to try and understand Lily's deepest being; and the attempt at the present moment was doubly welcome. I preferred reading her heart to looking into mine.

My eye presently fell upon a little book lying open on the table. I glanced at it, and lo! it explained the mystery! This is what I read:

"In the sacrament of the Lord's Table the Saviour gives Himself to the believing soul. It is a holy communion, blessed beyond utterance. The love of earthly bride and bridegroom is a poor human type. Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom, and the believer's heart the bride. The love that unites them is unspeakable, filling the soul with a foretaste of heaven's perfect bliss."

Now I understood, or at least guessed, what was passing in Lily. Her soul was moved as the soul of a bride at the nearness of the bridegroom to whom she is willing to belong. She had always loved her Saviour, but a new love was upon her; never had she been so happy, and never so full of disquietude. She longs for Him, but is afraid; she stands trembling, yet knows she is safe with the lover of her soul, and to Him alone will she give herself.

You have heard of the gardens of Jericho — at any rate you have read of the lilies of the field, which toil

not and do not spin, and yet are more beautiful than Solomon in his glory.

Lily and I — we used to watch these lilies growing in the valley of Jericho — Lily, the fairest of her sisters. She told me a story one evening as we walked amid the flowers. I never knew whence she had her stories. I often felt as though a Higher Being spoke through her, even God Himself, and I would listen with a kind of devotion, never questioning her words, as though they were a revelation. Even now her musical accents tremble in my ear, as I recall the story she then told me:

"A man lay dying. The world vanished from his sight, and he was left alone with the question, 'Whither art thou going?' — that question filling him with fear and trembling.

"He lay writhing on his bed of agony, when suddenly he beheld ten shapes closing him in, cold and pitiless — God's holy commandments. And one after another they lifted up their voice. The first saying, 'Unhappy man, how many gods hast thou allowed to enter into thy sinful heart?' The second, 'How many idols hast thou set up in His stead?' The third, 'How often hast thou taken the name of the Lord thy God in vain?' The fourth, 'How hast thou kept the Sabbath day, and caused others to keep it?' The fifth, 'How hast thou honored thy father and mother, and those that were set in authority over thee?' The sixth, 'How hast thou acted by thy brother, doing unto him as thou wouldst he should do unto thee?' And on they went, the ten of them, each with the voice of judgment, confounding his soul.

"And the dying man, anguished and hopeless, had not a word to say. He felt convicted, and knew he was

lost. At last he cried despairingly, 'I know I have sinned, but can you not leave me to die in peace?'

"And they made answer, 'We cannot leave thee unless One will take our place, to whom you shall yield yourself body and soul to all eternity, abiding by His judgment. Will you do that?'

"The sick man considered; he was afraid of the One even, and his heart, beating feebly, shook with fear. Yet at last he said, 'I would rather have the One judge me, since I cannot answer you ten.'

"And behold at his word the dread accusers vanished, and there appeared in their stead One, holy and compassionate, just and forgiving. And the dying sinner looked to Him. Death had a hold of him already, but he felt the breath of life. He remembered all at once what in far-off days he had heard of One dying for many, recalling the holy lessons of his childhood at his mother's knee, when she told him of the Lord that is mighty to save. He had forgotten it, living a life of folly and of sin; but it was coming back to him even now. And looking again, behold he knew Him that stood by his side.

"And faith gathered strength, a smile of blessed trust lighting up his face; and with dying lips he cried:

"'Let me be thine, Lord,— thine only — now and for ever! Have mercy on me, O Christ, and redeem my spirit!'

"He sank in death, but peace had been given him."

LETTER XVII.

I REMEMBER times of true contrition in my life; not only when I felt cast down, but when I experienced also anguish of soul. The burden on my heart at such moments would almost crush me. I did see the nothingness and wretchedness of my pursuits; I felt I was on the road that would lead me to perdition. I seemed to hear voices crying: "Return — ah, return while yet it is time!" And my soul made answer: "I will return before it is too late." It was not too late while such promptings urged me. The deep unrest within was tending toward peace. I might have come forth a new creature from the conflict had I but taken up the struggle with sincerity — but I did not; weak endeavors at best were all. And sometimes when I could not but consider my sins moodily, even sorrowfully, thoughts of levity would dart through me, pushing aside the tender stirrings of life eternal; and with renewed carelessness I plunged deeper than before into the whirl of amusement. Indeed, from my own experience, and from what I have seen in others, I can testify to the awful truth that an evil spirit has power over human souls. How often some one has formed the best of resolutions; he has turned from sin, and is anxious to seek the way of life; but the tempter enters his heart, and he falls deeper than before.

And then to say there is no devil!

Devil? Yes; it is no use mincing an awful fact — it *is* he who drags man to hell. There *is* a devil, and the number of demons is legion.

But, say you, how is it that God — the strong, righteous, pitiful God — allows the evil one such terrible power over human souls? Can He be the all-loving, all-merciful Father, if He does not snatch them from the destroyer even at the moment of their weakness?

Do you doubt God, my friend? Was it not He who sent His good angels to watch the door of your heart; who put all that trouble and anguish into you; who made you feel, and tremble at, the burden of your sin? Ay, it is His Spirit who is at work in us when we feel we have done wrong; when we long to rise to a better life. It is He who shows us that we can rise, if only we will!

But our will is at fault — our sincerity. That is it! What God does for us even at such decisive moments is immeasurably more than what the devil can do. But to God we listen not, great as His love is; we care not for the riches of grace with which He tries to save us; whereas the devil need but pipe, and we straightway are ready to do his bidding.

Is it to be marveled at that there is nothing left for us but to go to hell?

I have more to say; but how shall I say it? Will words not end in a wail of despair?

In those happy days when I had Lily by my side, I often gave myself up to the enchanting thought that she was the good angel of my life, sent by God's infinite mercy, and that through her His love would lead me to heaven. That view of our relation was very sweet, and often filled me with the best of intentions. But if my heart was touched, it was but surface emotion; I was willing enough to be led by Lily; but I cared not to be led to God.

Lily's mission, then, failed of its object, and there was no help for me.

Since I have come to this dreadful place my eyes have been opened to see that if I had yielded to the strivings of grace, and had given my heart to God, Lily would not have died in the flower of life; that, on the contrary, God's gift of happiness was coming to me through her.

Even in those latter days, when the shadow of death was upon her — ay, and on me too, it would not have been too late. A voice now says: Had I repented of my evil course — had I turned to God even as a prodigal — grace was at hand, and my Lily would not have left me. Death would have been stayed, having done its work of rousing the sinner. God himself would have given me Lily and the blessing of her love, and a new happy life might have followed.

But no. God's means of grace could not break down the wall I had built about my heart. I would not turn from sin. What could she do but die? There was no other way of saving her from a life with me — a life that would have wronged her lovely soul. Her pure-robed spirit must needs wing its flight to heaven. Lily could but die, and it was well that she died.

Well for her! I say so with the honesty of despair. How I hate myself! — ready to dash myself to pieces, were it but possible. All is fraught with regret wherever I turn; but this one thought that Lily was *meant* to be mine for a life of happiness is enough to turn all future existence into a hell of hells. God meant to bless me had He but found me worthy. Earth might have been heaven, and a better heaven to come! Do

you understand now what hell is, and the awful misery of its retribution?

I have lately been to a ball. You know that I have always been more or less of a ladies' man; but I did not frequent ball-rooms over long. I soon got tired of that sort of pleasure; perhaps I was too heavy — too much of an athlete, to be famous for dancing. In early youth, however, I loved it passionately — forgetting everything, earth and heaven, in the whirl of an intoxicating waltz.

But in my riper years I raised objections to dancing. I always looked at the æsthetic side of things. I began to urge the unbecomingness of going on dancing for ten, fifteen, years, or more. Let people dance for two or three years and be satisfied. The pleasure might be compared then to the fluttering of the butterfly amid the roses of spring; there is fitness in that on first quitting the chrysalis of childhood. Let young people dance — becoming dances that is! For them it is a natural and even beautiful pastime — an overflowing of the exuberance of life, and an innocent pleasure to their untaught perception.

However it was a grand ball which I visited lately, and most fashionably attended. The society, to be sure, was mixed, but that also gave a zest. The illumination was perfect, considering our state of light. For even with a thousand chandeliers we cannot rise above a crepuscule; the tapers emit a false light only, making no impression whatever upon the reigning gloom. A good band was in attendance, but all their efforts produced no sound. Everything being illusive here, music naturally is left to imagination. One thinks one hears, and falls to dancing.

The ladies were gorgeously attired in fashions representing several centuries; it almost looked like a masquerade; but these fair ones were only true, each to her time. And on the other hand, an attempt at masking would have been poor deception, since all their pomp and vanity was transparent! Whatever their finery, you saw the unclothed woman beneath — some bewitchingly beautiful, others more like mummies than anything else. We marched round and round the spacious saloon, exchanging ladies at given times, so that one had the pleasure of touching hands with all the fair ones present, and forming their acquaintance.

What a surprise! In my dining-room at home I had a fine picture by a well-known artist. It represented a Roman beggar girl in life-size, three-quarter length. She is to be found in endless pictures, bearing dates from 1835–1842; for that she was in high favor as a model need scarcely be said. She was of true Roman blood, born at Trastevere — a fine type of Roman beauty — her face and figure, her grace and bearing, being equally admirable. And her rags, which she understood how to arrange in a manner so truly picturesque, were scarcely less charming. Fashionable ladies, with all their getting up, looked poor and insipid by the side of that beggar girl! And somehow she appeared proud of her rags, and would not have exchanged them for the most elegant attire; for she knew that to them she owed half her attraction, her independence and liberty besides. Paolina she was called; but among the strangers at Rome she went by the name of *la reina dei mendicandi,* the beggar queen, or simply *La Reina.* Behold now the original of my picture — *La Reina* in person!

One evening, as I was walking through one of the

more quiet streets of Rome, a young woman, hastening up behind me, caught my arm tremblingly, imploring me to protect her. It was *La Reina.* Of course I did protect her, seeing her home; arm in arm we went through the ill-lit streets, and friendliness seemed natural. I did not know *La Reina,* but with a candor found in Italy only, she explained to me her position. She was happy now, she said — very happy. Most people treated her kindly, no one dared think ill of her, and she was as free as the bird in the air. So long as she could wear her rags with honor, she would not exchange them for the velvet and gold of a princess. More than this even she told me, though without mentioning names; she had had the most enticing offers, but — *sia benito Iddio* — she had refused them all. Arrived at her humble dwelling, she kissed me with a frank trustfulness, as a child might, and we parted. I subsequently had her painted.

After some years *La Reina* suddenly vanished. She had risen, as she said, above many a temptation — the proud beggar girl; but of one thing she had not thought, the possibility of love! Heaven seemed open; she loved, she yielded — and happiness was gone. In her rags she had been a queen — in silks and jewels she was but a slave. And worse was at hand. She was betrayed, and cruelly disillusioned. Then all the natural gentleness of her disposition forsook her; a demon awoke instead, not shrinking even from vulgar crime. She thirsted for revenge. She was still a marvel of beauty, no longer gracious, but majestic. With an icy heart, yet burning in vindictiveness, she gathered her skirts about her, succeeding presently in making a fool of an old rake of a prince. For a moment only she stood at the height of splendor, meteorlike, but long

enough to obtain the satisfaction she craved. With a crash it ended, and she never rose again.

Now she was once more beside me, resting her arm in mine; but what a difference between the present moment and that far-off evening when I escorted her through the dusky streets of Rome. I had recognized her on the spot, and yet how she was changed! Involuntarily my feelings shaped themselves to a sigh. There is no happiness but that of innocence after all! But when I bent to her, whispering, "*La Reina! Sta sempre in ricordanza!*" she answered with trembling haste, as though overcome with the recollection, "*O state zitto, zitto! Nell' inferno tutt' e finito! La gioja, l'incuranza l'amor 'e la speranza!*"

As I was about to quit the ball, I was stopped by a man, to all appearance a *roué* of the first order, addressing me somewhat flippantly: "I see you are at home in this sort of thing; but have you assisted at *the* ball? That is quite another affair, rendering all this stupid and tame; it will come round again presently!"

I did not understand his hint, nor did I care to ask for an explanation. But I was to find out before long.

For as the time draws near when utter darkness sinks upon hell, a madness of dissipation possesses the fashionable — a straining of all efforts to make the most of the respite, as it were. This rage of amusement is vanity, like everything, and fruitful of pain only. But, nevertheless, the greed of pleasure abounds — plays, orgies, and immodest pastimes succeeding one another in a perfect whirl; all is forgotten, save one thing, intoxicating and stunning the senses. Nothing so wild, so frantic, so shameless, but it is had recourse to at this period; and he who most successfully throws off

restraint is the hero of the day. That well-bred society with difficulty preserves its reputation, you may imagine; for none so well-bred but they yield to the contagion of *the* ball. They only *try* to preserve appearances, that is all!

There is something remarkably like it upon earth — I mean the revelry before Lent. The season of dead darkness is our Lent, but alas it leads to no Easter beyond! The devil surely has raised up that porch by which men enter upon a solemn time — the carnival of fools; here then we have it to perfection, winding up with *the* ball.

And what is it like, this ball?— beginning in propriety of course, the ladies all smiles, the men pictures of ease. The dancing at first is most orderly, following a gently-swelling rhythm, but as a rising sea is its excitement. Look at their eyes — at the panting mouth half-open! More tightly they clutch one another. . . .

Dead darkness is at hand; they heed it not in maddened whirl. Voluptuousness is all but one with torment; they dance as though a taskmaster drove them on to it — the taskmaster of sin. The greed is theirs — satisfaction alone is withheld.

See the fair ones bereft of beauty, the gracious garments draggled and soiled! Is there a more awful sight than unwomanly woman, hollow-eyed, corpse-complexioned, with dishevelled hair and tattered clothes? As for men — the wild beast nature is upon them.

It is a mercy that darkness in the end envelops it all — falling suddenly — and covering, like the deluge of yore, what is only fit to be covered. See the end of pleasure unsanctified! The night of death engulfs them, and what then?— what then?

LETTER XVIII.

YOU are aware no doubt, and have experienced it yourself, that the perfume of a flower will wake memories — sweet happy feelings especially; but slumbering passions also obey the call. If on earth this may mean a kind of agonizing delight, here it is hell!

Do not imagine that there are flowers in this place; there are none here — none whatever — no growth of any kind! Even faded flowers are of the earth. O foolish men! yours is a flower-yielding world, and you will not see that, with all its trouble and sorrow, it is a blessed abode! It is the exceeding love of your Father in heaven, overflowing continually, which creates the flowers. Those millions of perfumed blossoms are the vouchers of love eternal — the sparkling pearls of the cup which runneth over, given by God to man.

Flowers below and stars above — happy are ye who yet walk in life. But you follow your path, heedless of flowers and heedless of stars, engrossed with your paltry self and its too often worthless concerns. O foolish men!

No, there is no blossoming here; but it is part of our torment to be haunted occasionally by the far-off perfume of some flower. Imagination of course, but all the more potent is the effect. The sweet incense has power to call up, not feelings merely, but visions on which we love to dwell — the spell of vanished enjoyment. Can you conceive it: the fulness of past delight returning upon you as by magic, yourself being a prey to death and boundless misery?

It may be a rich carnation. The fragrance even now will speak to me of her who wore it, and of her glowing eyes.

Or a jasmine of intoxicating richness. In a summer-house, overhung with the sweet-scented shrub, I found the fair-haired beauty. My heart was full, and I longed to clasp her, to be drowned in the depth of her sea-blue eyes. I was spellbound, the dreamy influence of the flowers stealing through the noontide sun.

Or again, a luscious heliotrope. We were alone in the garden on a summer eve, a balmy twilight about us. I was to leave her the following morning; she being tied by ungenial wedlock. Her beauty was rich as the southern clime; her dark eyes mournful, but owning a wondrous charm; her smile the saddest I ever knew. She plucked one of the flowers that steeped the night with fragrance and gave it me — calling me her truest friend.

Such is the language of flowers to me, coming on the waves of their perfume; and the sweeter such memories, the more cruelly they torture the mind, raising passion to madness, although we are unclothed of all bodily sense, and there is no healing for the suffering soul.

It is only the strong-scented flowers that move me so powerfully; their gentler sisters, the violet and heartsease, touch me not. Yet one I may except — an only one; it also brings pain, but I bless it. I have often been followed of late by tender wafts as from a rose. It is a particular rose, and I see it even now. A most delicate blush suffuses its petals; what color there is might be called an ethereal glow at its heart; to the cursory glance it is white, but I know better. Lily once gave me that rose; that is,

I asked her for it; I do not suppose she would have thought of giving it to me of her own accord. It was at Venice one day; we were at St. Mark's, standing in front of that altar sacred to the Madonna, with its famous Byzantine paintings. We were alone; a crippled beggar had just limped away, having called down "Our Lady's" blessing upon us. A holy feeling stole over me — holy perhaps because the cripple had called Lily *la sua sposa.* She had not heard it, or had not understood it. There she stood with the rose in her hand — the blushing flower being a sweet image of herself.

"Give me that rose, Lily!" I said; and she handed it at once, innocently.

"Kiss it first," I said.

She did so, and handed it back again with the most charming of smiles.

I took it, kissing it in my turn. The perfume of this very rose has been coming to me of late. It seems strange. Is it possible, after all, that there is a kind of spiritual bond between blessed souls and the lost ones here, immaterial as the breath of a flower? O happy thought, let me hold it fast . . . alas it has vanished . . . transient as the wafted odor itself!

That sublime moment when the glory of Paradise will break through the night cannot be far now; it is coming, coming! I shall behold her again, and though it be a pang of ten thousand sorrows I care not. I shall see her in heavenly beauty; . . . but oh, the darkness that will follow! Yet come what may, her picture will not quit me. . . . I see it — shall always see it — radiant in bliss, though I be in the depth of hell. Can it be utter damnation if God leaves me that much of communion with one of

His blessed saints? I know, I feel, that she is thinking of me as I think of her — loving me, though it be with the love of a sister. What shall I say — dare I say it? *Could* God be a Father if the sister is in heaven, and the brother for ever lost in hell? . . .

I went to church the other day, not for the first time; but I have refrained from speaking about it hitherto for very shame's sake. Indeed, I would rather have kept away altogether, but one is forced to do a great deal here one would prefer to leave alone.

Be it known, then, that hell is not without a church establishment. We have everything, you see, yet nothing — nothing! You will understand, I cannot be speaking of *the* Church, in the true meaning of the word, that is why I add establishment — disestablishment would be as good a term — and of course there is no such thing as a worshipping congregation here, or anything like divine service. I can only say we go to church. Good heavens, what a farce!

There are about as many churches here as there are reverend gentlemen, and that is saying a good deal! All false and faithless ecclesiastics — all who, for the sake of a good living or other worldly advantage, have sinned against the gospel — all hirelings wronging the Lord's sheep — are gathered here. Now they are eaten up with a burning zeal for the gospel which once they slighted, but that gospel is far from them; they are devoured now with love for the sheep, but there are no sheep to be tended. They build churches upon churches, preaching morning, noon and night; but never a word of God's passes their lips. If the word of grace were yet within their reach, they and their listeners might be saved. But

their stewardship is over and the mysteries are taken from them. Yet they are driven — driven to preach, for ever seeking the one pearl they so grievously neglected.

And so are the people — seeking I mean — but not finding. Hell is full of professing Christians. This may sound strange, but it is true nevertheless, since all the thousands are here to whom Christianity in life was but an outward thing — a habit, or even a mask, hiding an unconverted heart; all those who, having heard the message of salvation, listened to it complacently, but never strove to make sure of it for themselves — merely playing with God's truth, as it were, falling away in the time of temptation. They are hungering and thirsting now for the word once despised, but it has passed away for ever. They know it, for some of them have been at their hopeless endeavor for years and centuries now; but they cannot resist flocking to the would-be churches, listening anxiously to ministers that cannot minister.

The churches consequently are full to overflowing, but you always find room; for a spirit, a shade, can squeeze in anywhere. There is no need, therefore, to take a pew, or pay for it either, as you do upon earth, where the rich command the best places, be it at the theater or at the church. That is one advantage we have over you.

At an evening party the other day I met a certain Rev. Mr. T——. I had nearly given his name, but that is against my principles. Who should he be but an old acquaintance of former years! I remember him well, a fashionable parson of the kind the world approves of — gentlemanly and easy-going in world and deed. Shaking hands on leaving, he said

lightly: "I shall be glad to preach to you if you'll come. I have built a church in Sensuality Square — queer name, ain't it?— anybody can show you the way — just at the top of Infirmity Street. I've concocted a grand sermon for next Sunday; you'd better come." What could I do but go. I might as well listen to my old acquaintance as to any other pretender of the cloth.

I found the church in the Square indicated. I was late, coming in upon the singing; but, ye angels, what singing! Instead of saintly hymns, the most horrible songs I ever heard — the natural utterance of the people's own thoughts. The congregation was exceedingly fashionable, of irreproachable attitude. But old men, apparently crowned with honor — young women, wearing innocence as a garment — joined in that shameless performance. Parents encouraged their children, husbands, their wives, unabashed. Alas! and no sooner had I entered than I was no better than the rest; having come to sing praises, my evil thoughts bubbled over, and I desecrated good intention with ribald song.

It ceased. The parson appeared in his pulpit with an assumption of sanctity quite edifying — but for a moment only, then his beautiful expression gave way to a deplorable grin. It was with difficulty that he reigned in his feelings, and looked serious and sanctimonious again as he began:

"My worshipping friends . . ." a proper beginning, no doubt, and I am sure he meant his very best — proceeding vigorously for quite half an hour, I should say, opening and shutting his mouth with the most frightful grimaces, though never a word came forth. He seemed to be aware of it and made desperate efforts at eloquence; presently he began again:

"My worshipping friends . . . and now he ap-

peared to be in high water, dashing and splashing and floundering along, quite drenching the congregation with his fluency; but never a thought he gave them, and the most shallow of his listeners resented it presently. He was just winding up his rhetoric when there was an outburst of laughter; he stopped short, open-mouthed, and, like a poodle that had had a ducking, shamefacedly slunk down his pulpit stair.

I could tell more, but let me cast a veil over it. I left the place heavy-hearted.

Is there anything worse than to pretend to be living, being dead — dead!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE sweeter memories are in themselves, the greater their bitterness in hell, is it not strange? nay, it is dreadful. I am a prey to despair, not that despair which finds an outlet in raving madness — there is life in that — but a kind of apathy which is the sister of death. Despair is one's daily bread here; it is in us, it is about us.

Absorbed at times — closing my eyes I had almost said, but it is no use doing that here — withdrawing within myself, however, I have the strangest fancies and imaginings.

The other day I believed myself carried away into a wood. It was one of those wondrous May-days when spring bursts to life not only in nature, but in the heart as well. But the delights of spring are never so pure, the human soul is never so uplifted, as in some genial forest-glade.

The joyful carols of the feathered songsters found an echo in my heart; I felt ready to join in their thanksgiving. The rich fragrance of the wood was about me, sinking into my soul, when suddenly I heard Lily's voice somewhere between the trees.

I started — shaken out of my dreamful delight. O cruelty — where am I? There are no birds here, no woodland enchantment, no love that might call!

We had taken a house one summer amid the scenery of the lake country. There were splendid woods about us. My mother had provided herself with compan-

ionship, so that I could follow my own bent whenever I chose.

Often in the early morning I would take Lily for a row, landing now here, now there, to spend the day, gypsy-fashion, amid the woody glens. I delighted at such times in having escaped from the world and its pleasures; what sort of renunciation that was you will readily understand. I was nowise prepared to give up the world in order to gain heaven. I merely felt nauseated with the excess, young as I was, and glad to turn my back upon it for a time; but not longing for anything better or higher.

Lily too delighted in burying herself in nature, as she called it. And aimlessly we would wander about the livelong day, stopping where the fancy took us, and proceeding again to look for other spots of enchantment. Now and then we would come upon a hut where frugal fare was obtainable; or we took with us what might satisfy simple need. Let us live like children of the wood, we said, and did so.

Lily might be about twelve years at the time. My mother rather objected to our uncivilized roamings; but meeting my opposition, she contented herself with the final injunction, "See that Lily does not get too wild." Wild, sweet dove!—how should she?

Lily's company was as refreshing to me as the dewy fragrance of the landscape. In those genial days the graciousness of her being unfolded, and I felt a child with her. How she could laugh and chatter, delight in a nothing, and call up the echoes! How easy and free and charming was her every movement! She must look into everything, peeping now here, now there, finding surprises everywhere. Hers was a marvelous gift of understanding the little mysteries of nature.

The least and most hidden escaped not her notice. Where others passed heedless, she perceived wonders. It seemed as if nature delighted in opening her secret beauty to the pure-eyed child. The nimble deer came forth from the cover and looked at her with trustful gaze — turning and looking again, as though inviting her to follow. The sly fox would quit his lair, seeking mice and beetles for his supper, untroubled by her presence, but giving her a furtive squint now and then, as if to keep her in sight. The birds chirped at her merrily, or, half hiding in the leafy bowers, warbled down upon her their most gleeful song — others running along the lichened boles, as if to show off their special art. The little squirrels, hopping from bough to bough, would follow her about the wood. Rare plants and flowers seemed to grow beneath her footstep; they were there at least whenever she looked for them. Everything enchanting her added to her charms; as the fairy of the place she appeared in her sylphlike loveliness, with those eyes that welled over with a light touched by sadness, and that smile that spoke of sunbeams sparkling through rain.

We would camp beneath some tree at times, gathering sticks and fir-cones for a fire, by way of preparing for a meal. This done, I would leave Lily to her own devices, and how proud she was of her assumed dignity! We quite feasted on such occasions; never did I enjoy the grandest dinner more. I would call her my little wife, as I watched her busy contrivances, and truly all those nameless graces were hers with which tenderest woman will flit round the object of her care.

Having enjoyed our gypsy meal, she would read to me, and sometimes I yielded to courting sleep; then she would watch by me, keeping the buzzing flies from

disturbing my slumbers; and on waking, the first thing I grew conscious of were those radiant stars — her faithful eyes.

At other times I would read by myself, or pretend to read, listening to that mysterious rustle in the tree-tops which is as of distant water, and to the many sounds that break upon the stillness of the wood, making it more solemn by contrast. Lily then would roam about by herself, never unoccupied. Innumerable were the wreaths she made and the nosegays she gathered; or she would return rich with spoils, bringing leaves full of berries, red and ripe. But she never was out of the reach of my voice. Life seemed a perfect idyl.

One day — we were just saying that we ought to know the woods by heart now — having gone rather farther than usual, we came upon a little house I had cause to remember, though I had chosen to forget it, covered with clematis and roses,— the charming lodge where I had met Annie. I started, horror-struck, trembling, and no doubt white as death, frightening poor little Lily dreadfully. She anxiously inquired what ailed me; but not till some minutes had elapsed had I recovered sufficiently to pretend to answer her questions, dragging her away with me hastily. What explanation I gave her I know not; I only remember that all that day I could not look her in the eyes again. How she pained me with her tender inquiries, her loving sympathy — little guessing, poor child, what a frightful memory she kept hovering about in her innocence.

We continued our roamings, extending them farther still — for I could not rest — but delight there was none. Poor little Lily, she had set out full of hopes of pleasure, and found nothing but sadness and dis-

spiritedness; she was ready to sink with fatigue, but I saw it not.

Toward evening a storm broke, and as we neared the lake we found it one seething mass of boiling waters. I dared not risk the child in the boat, so nothing remained but to follow the path by the shore, the distance to the house, fortunately, not being beyond possibilities. But Lily was tired out. The storm spirit flapped his angry wings about us. I wrapped her in a cloak, saying I would carry her home. She assured me she was able to walk; but no, I would carry her.

And how light was the burden! how doubly dear! I felt as if I could walk on thus to the ends of the world. Holding her close I went on steadily, having a couple of miles before me. The stormy clouds were driving overhead, the rain kept beating about me; but I cared not, meeting force with force. How touching was Lily's anxiety lest she should prove troublesome; and, finding that I was fully bent on carrying her home, how sweetly she would set herself to repay me, whispering words of loving gratitude, as if thereby to lessen the burden! But even at that time I could not shut out profaning fancy; my thoughts before long reverted to the carrying off of the Sabines in the Loggia dei Lanzi at Florence. I was ashamed of the comparison, and tried to turn from it by an effort of will; so, partly to punish myself for the unworthy image, partly also to amuse Lily, I called up another picture, which, I hoped, was more in harmony with the occasion — the story of Christophorus carrying the Holy Child. I told Lily the legend of the powerful heathen who, conscious of his strength, would serve none but the greatest, and who, from kings and emperors, was directed

at last to Christ crucified. Seeking for Him vainly the world over, he dwelt at last by the side of a tempestuous torrent, satisfied to carry pilgrims across. Years had passed, when one night he heard the calling of a child, and lifted it upon his mighty shoulder, the burden growing and growing till he nearly broke down in the river. Yet reaching the other shore, the wonderful child said to the hoary giant: "Thou shalt be called Christophorus, for thou hast borne thy Lord!" And the heathen knew Him and suffered himself to be baptized.

My story had rocked Lily to sleep. Her arm was about my neck, her warm cheek resting against mine. In silence I walked along.

But the legend had left an impression on my own heart. The figure of the Savior had risen before me; I seemed conscious of His holy presence. I had not thought of him for many a day. But buried out of sight though the faith of childhood was, it had not yet died; it was welling up even now from the dark depth of my heart, followed by recollections, some bitter, some sweet — the bitter ones abounding, hiding their head in shame. What a weight of sin had I not heaped upon me in the few years of life I called mine.

The sleeping child grew heavier and heavier; but I seemed bearing a burden of sin.

With uncertain footstep I staggered onward through the darksome night. The storm increased, lashing the waves and hurling them in masses of curdled foam against the rocky shore. More than once I felt water about my feet, as though the maddened lake had risen to drag me down. But on I went, heaving and panting, the cold dews breaking from every pore. It was not so much the physical powers, as the strength of

MY STORY HAD ROCKED LILY TO SLEEP

soul giving way. I experienced a weight of wretchedness never known before. Tortured by regret and fear — by an utter contempt, moreover, of self — I had reached for once a frame of mind that might enable me to turn upon the miserable I, and become a new creature perchance. Who knows but that I was near the blessed victory, when lo! there was the light from my mother's window appearing through the darkness and dispelling my thoughts. It was all gone — grief and regret and emotion. Would that the house had been a little farther, and the time gained might have defrauded hell of its prey!

Cold and shivering I entered the well-lit room, leaving outside the chastened feelings that had come to me in the troubled night. And finding myself once more in the cozy chamber, I breathed with a great sense of relief.

And now Lily was waking from her sleep. "What a beautiful dream!" she whispered, with half opening eyes, as I dropped a kiss on her forehead by way of bidding her good-night. They were carrying her off to bed.

The following morning she told me her dream:

"I thought I was standing by the side of a river. And presently I saw St. Christophorus coming towards me with the Christ-Child upon his shoulder. He stopped, and the Child sat down by me; we played with grasses and flowers, singing songs, and I felt very happy. But the big Christophorus looked down upon us, leaning on his staff.

"We twined the flowers into wreaths, but the Child could do more than I. It made a cross, and then a crown of thorns, putting that upon His temples. There were tiny red flowers between the stalks, hang-

ing loosely over the forehead, and reminding one of drops of blood. And presently the Christ-Child said: 'We will think of something else; look me in the face — what is it you see?' I looked and seemed to behold, firstly, the Sower that went forth to sow; then the good Samaritan, and it was as though I heard Him speak. And next I saw the Good Shepherd carrying the lamb in His bosom. I dare say I might have seen more had not a question come to me. 'Is it true,' I asked, 'that men could be so wicked as to hang Thee upon the Cross, piercing Thy side with a spear?'

"'Yes,' said the Christ, 'see here are My hands, and see My side!' The marks were red as blood, and I cried bitterly. 'Weep not, little Lily,' said He; 'I do not feel it now; the love of my Father in heaven, and the love of my brothers and sisters upon earth, have made up for it long ago.'

"We had been silent awhile, when the Christ-Child resumed: 'Would you not like to be carried a little by this kind Christophorus? he does it so gently. Where would you like him to take you?'

"'Well,' I said, scarcely considering, 'I always had a longing for the Holy Land. But that is a long way off, and I should have to leave Thee here.'

"'No, Lily, it is not nearly so far as you think,' replied the Christ, 'and you and I will never part. You will find me there if you like to go.'

"I rose, and Christophorus took me upon his shoulder, carrying me far, far away. By day he followed a bright red cloud, by night a shining star. It was the star of Bethlehem. Through many lands we went, hearing tongues I understood not, passing mountains and rivers and lakes, and going over the great sea at last. There was no land to be seen now, and the waves

rose high as mountains. I grew afraid lest we should never get through. But good Christophorus said: 'Fear not, little child; I have borne my dear Lord Christ; I shall not fail to carry thee.'

"And after many days we reached the other shore — it was the Holy Land. On he walked, with his staff in his hand and me upon his shoulder, past Jerusalem, the white walls of which lay sparkling in the sunshine — the royal city looking as beautiful as ever she could have been in the days of yore. Farther still — not far — and he stopped in a little town nestling amid her hills. Here the star stood still. It was Bethlehem.

"Christophorus put me down before a humble inn.

"The door opened, and, behold, the Holy Child was there, taking me by the hand and leading me in. 'There is only a manger here, little Lily, to make thee welcome. But one day, when thou art weary of life, I will take thee to a mansion above.'

"And the Christ-Child drew me close — oh so lovingly — close, quite close, and kissed me. . . .

"I awoke; we had just reached home. Ah, Philip, I would have liked to go on dreaming for ever!"

"Well, little sister," I said gaily, "I think you might be satisfied. Haven't you been to Bethlehem and back, and seen no end of wonders in one short hour? What could you expect more?"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "you are right. I ought to be satisfied till Christ bids me welcome in His mansion above."

LETTER XX.

I HAD been seeking for Annie too long already, not to have all but given up the hope of ever meeting her again. She seemed utterly vanished. But hell is large, and its inhabitants are not to be numbered.

Inquiry for her quite unsettled my mode of life. I was but a vagabond, traveling hither and thither, driven onward by a gnawing need. There was a fire within me, and I thirsted; living man — no, not the parched wanderer in the desert ever knew such agony — thirsted for Annie, though I knew she was but as a broken cistern that can hold no water, and unable, therefore, to soothe my pain. She had lost that privilege of womanhood in life even — how much more so in hell. No; Annie could not quench my thirst. In vain she keeps wringing her garments, her once glorious hair; it is wet and dripping, though never a drop of water she wrings out of it. But she carries that about with her which would solve a terrible mystery. That is why I am driven to seek her — thinking and dreaming of her as I once did in life, when the red glow coursed through my veins, and I saw in her but a flower in the vast realm of nature, unfolding her beauty for my selfish delight. But how different now! It was not love that drew me — but the dread longing to read in her face concerning that awful likeness, which had flashed through my conscience on meeting her before. It was more than a presentiment then — it seemed an assurance; still I wanted proof to determine between doubt and certainty. She — she alone could be the

witness that sealed my guilt. Her features had spoken; but by her mouth alone could I finally be convicted. Yet, even though I found her, could I hope to hear her voice? My heart misgave me — but endeavor to find her I must.

At last, after many days, the desire seemed realized. I came upon her sitting by the river, motionless, and gazing into the turbid flow, as though about to seek death in its embrace. Hell, after all, at times offers what is akin to satisfaction: for a moment I forgot self and everything beside me, anxious only to approach her. As a gliding shadow I moved forward, scarcely to be distinguished from the crawling mists that haunt those banks of darkness.

I was able to watch her leisurely, though in fevered anguish and with trembling soul, examining her countenance and questioning her every feature. It was all pain and suffering to me; but I forced myself to the task, and the result was utterly startling, an effort of the will only keeping me from jumping to my feet. How could I have believed Martin to be her very image! There was a likeness certainly, but not more than might be merely casual.

It was the first time that I experienced anything like relief in hell — strange that it came to me by the side of that ominous river! A feeling of comfort all but superseded the pain of inquiry.

My eyes devouring her greedily, yielded conviction. No — hers was no likeness to Martin that need trouble me. But there was a likeness — *to whom?*

My satisfaction was shortlived, alas! A new horror laid hold of me, clutching my every fibre. What could it be? Doubt pursued by certainty darting through me — I saw it — Yes! Yes! Annie was not like

Martin; she was like that girl loved by Martin, whom I had lifted from poverty, but who had preferred poverty with Martin to a palace with me!

It must be so — the more I gazed the more certain I seemed. This then was Martin's secret that should have made all straight between us — that girl my daughter, and he, Martin, my son!

I shook with horror; again the words kept ringing in my brain that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children. That girl my child! So near had I been to commit a crime at which vice itself shrinks back appalled. My own daughter! Oh heavens of mercy, where indeed shall the consequences of sin find their limit?

Unutterable anguish laid hold of me. There she sat, pale, gloomy — a very image of pitiless fate. A few words of hers would have sufficed to dispel the misery of suspecting doubt.

But not a word she had for me; her soul and mine were utterly apart. The time was when she followed me, though I took her to the road of hell. Now she turned from me, and had I been able to show her the way to Paradise, I believe she would have spurned me with loathing.

My life seems one mass of darkness, but I see innumerable lights — some heavenly, some earthly — illumining the gloom. It is more especially the countless proofs of God's fatherly goodness I call to mind; like stars I see them shining through the night of my sinful folly.

I see now often God was near me, how often His hand was upon me to stop me in the downward course; to warn me, move me, draw me to Him in unutterable

mercy. How tender, how faithful, how long-suffering was He in His dealings with me, following me in pity all the days of my life — as, indeed, He follows all men. Oh, think of it my brothers, my sisters, ye, whose eyes are not yet closed in death. He is following you, loving you daily, continually! But I spurned the touch of that hand, not caring for His love, and I am lost now, having my portion with the ungodly in the place of wailing and gnashing of teeth.

I could not but be moved sometimes. The hand reaching down from heaven was too plainly to be felt; the blessings it spread about my path were too great for even me to disregard them. There were times when I felt I ought to kiss that hand of mercy, pouring out tears of repentant gratitude. My heart would be softened and stirred to the depth. If sorrow for sin was weak, yet resolutions to mend my ways seemed strong, and I believed I should never again forget how good the Lord had been.

But forget I did, losing sight of everything — love, gratitude, benefit, and resolve — ay, of God Himself! Nor was it mere forgetting — no, I cared not to remember; turning away so fully, that when trouble once more overtook me, I never even thought of Him who had helped me and pitied me before.

Yes, let me confess it loudly, *it is not the fault of God* that I did not come forth from earth's besetting dangers a redeemed and blessed soul!

The parable of the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep, how simple it is, and how it speaks to the heart? And that love is not only for the flock as a whole, but for each individual sheep — ever leaving the ninety and nine to go after that which is gone

astray. And how tenderly will He seek for it, and, if so be that He find it, carry it home, rejoicing!

Yes, I feel it now, if I did not feel it then, that all through my sinful life there was One seeking me in sorrow and in hope, ay — and finding me again and again! But I would not stay in the fold, preferring my own dark ways to His watchful guidance. I would not, and lo, I am lost!

I never was visited by serious illness after that first trouble at the outset of manhood till the days of my final agony; but I once suffered from inflammation of the eyes, which necessitated my abiding for several weeks in a darkened room. That was a time of misery — not merely a trial to patience, but simply awful. I gained a pretty clear idea of the signal punishment inflicted by the solitary-confinement system in prisons. To a heart burdened with evil recollections there can be no greater misery than solitude. Days and nights were crawling past alike in gloom; and it seemed to me not only that darkness itself increased, but that I was engulfed by it more and more. And yet that darkness was but a feeble foretaste of the night enclosing me here; I thought it fearful then; it would be mercy now.

I had plenty of so-called friends, but somehow not many cared to visit me; it was not pleasant, I suppose, to share my confinement and listen to my dismal grumblings.

So I was left alone for the most part. Alone?— nay, I had company. My better self had a chance now of being heard. I had forgotten it, neglected it, banished it for years. But it had found me out, seizing upon my loneliness to confront me, darkness not being an obstacle. I disliked it exceedingly, yet

what could I do but listen. It had come to upbraid me, contending with me, and left me no peace.

There are two selves in every man, never at unity with one another, although theirs is a brotherhood closer than that of Castor and Pollux of old; striving continuously, not because love is wanting, but because contention is their very nature. That duality in man is the outcome of sin. If he could be saved from it, sin with all its consequences would cease to enthral him. And there is a release, as I found out in those darkened days. We wrestled without a hope of conciliation. There is not a more stiff-necked or inflexible being than what is called the better self. Not one iota would it yield; but I was to give up everything, should strip myself entirely to the death even of self. But I would not and perhaps I could not.

Yes, I could, if I would! For presently I perceived that we were not two but three; two warring, and a third one trying to mediate in earnest love. I could oppose the better self but Him I dared not contradict. I felt it too plainly that He was right, and that through Him only I could be at peace with myself and begin a new life. I knew who He was, the one Mediator, not only between me and that other self, but between me and the righteous God — the only-begotten Son, once born in the flesh.

In those days I was His prisoner. There was no escaping in the dark corner in which He faced me — the Good Shepherd had found the wandering sheep, His arms were about me, and He was ready to take me home. But the willingness was only on His side; I cared not, suffering Him with a negative endurance merely, and not wanting to be kept fast. There was

something within me waiting but for opportunity to break away from the Shepherd's hold.

Nor was opportunity wanting; it is ever at hand when looked for by perversity. The evil one had nowise yielded his part in me, and required but little effort to assert it.

He invented an amusement that needed no light. One of my friends was his messenger, and I received him open-armed as a very liberator. Delightful pastime — that game of hazard — that could be played in the dark!

We played, my friend and I — no, the enemy and myself; for my companion was no other than the prince of darkness; the stakes — I knew it not then, but I know it now — being nothing less than my soul's salvation. With such an expert I could of course not compete; he won — I lost.

I remember a glorious evening on the Mediterranean. The day had been sultry, but towards sunset a gentle wind had risen; a cool air from the northwest, fresh and balmy, fanned the deck. The waves rose and sank in even cadence, their silvery crests sparkling far and wide. A playful troop of dolphins gamboled round the vessel.

The sun had just dipped his radiant front in the cooling waters; dashes of gold, amid a deeper glow of purple and red, burned in the western horizon, beyond the Ionian sea, enhancing an aspect of unutterable loveliness. To our left was the splendid island of Cythera, and, rising beyond it, with clear outlines and deepening shadows, the majestic hills of Maina, where Sparta was of old. To our right the beauteous Candia, with the heaven-kissing Ida, the snowy summit

of which was even now blushing in a rapture of parting light.

Lily sat silent and almost motionless, leaning against the bulwark, her hands pressed to her bosom, gazing absently toward the coast of Morea. The wind played caressingly with a curl of her silky hair. I knew not what to admire most, the glorious panorama, or the girlish figure that formed so lovely a center. My eyes rested on her, drinking in her beauty — ha! what was that? Uneasily she breathed, her chest heaving, her face turned to me with an expression of anguished distress. I saw that flush and pallor strove for the mastery in her face, and that her spirit battled against some unknown foe.

"What is it, Lily?" I cried, repressing emotion.

"I know not," she said, with a troubled sigh. "I felt a horrible weight on my soul. But be not anxious, my friend, it is gone already."

And indeed she looked herself again. I took her hand, and we sat side by side, not talking. The night descended slowly — a night of paradise. The land disappeared in folds of gray, the summit of Ida only preserving a faint flush, and the darkening dome above shone forth in myriads of sparkling lights.

"What are you thinking of, Lily?" I asked, presently closing my hand on hers.

"Shall I tell you, Philip?" she responded softly, looking me full in the face. "I just remembered a little story; would you like to hear it?" And she began:

"There was a poor man whose pious parents left him no heritage save an honest name and a good, God-loving heart; now although in this he had riches without measure, yet the world accounted him poor.

"It went well with him at first but by degrees he tasted trouble. He lost the small fortune he had succeeded in saving by dint of work. And the people pointed to him saying: 'Poor wretch!'

"'No, not poor,' he said; 'God is my portion!'

"But misfortune pursued him. Most of his so-called friends turned their back on him, and those even whom he had trusted most, proved faithless. He was deceived, calumniated, misjudged.

"And people shook their heads saying: 'How wretched and miserable you are, to be sure!'

"'No,' he said, though his voice trembled, 'not wretched, for God is my portion!'

"But the greatest trouble of all now laid him low; he lost his loving wife, and soon after his only child. The suffering man stood alone in a heartless world.

"Again the people said, shrugging their shoulders: 'Surely now you will own yourself miserable and wretched, a very butt of trouble!'

"'No,' he cried, repressing the welling tears, 'God is yet my portion!'

"And the people turned from him, saying he was singular and strange, and nicknaming him John Comfort in virtue of his peculiarity.

"But he, truly, was not wretched, nor indeed forsaken. The last words he was heard to speak on earth were: 'God in heaven is my portion!'

"And he entered into the joy of his Lord."

Did Lily love me? Again and again I ask myself this question. You will think it ought to be of little consequence to me now. But not so. Since all is vanity and nothingness here, the past only remains to be looked to; and even the sure knowledge that her love

was mine would be unspeakable comfort. But hell is void of comfort. Shall I ever find an answer to that question?

Again and again I have gone over the whole of my intercourse with her, trying to understand her part of the relation between us. Sometimes I have seemed to arrive at a "yes," and then a bitter "no" wipes out the happy conviction. She knew me from childhood, seeing a brother in me, no doubt — an elder brother even, for the discrepancy of years must have been against me. And she, whose heart from her tenderest youth had been directed to heaven, how should she, how could she, have fastened her affections on such a clod of earth as I was? And she died so young, in the happiest age of ideals.

But still, if I call back to mind the tenderness with which she ever surrounded me, the entire devotion that yielded to me with such loving surrender, and made her look to me as to her guide and guardian; and considering that I was the only one of my sex she was brought into close contact with, I say to myself — surely she loved me, she cannot but have loved me! Not with a feeling like mine, but with her own sweet affection, that love divine, passionless and pure, which so often spoke to my soul in intercourse with her, but which never found root in my heart.

And I cannot forget that in dying something seemed present with her, resembling the perfect love of holiest woman. It made efforts to flow into words, it hovered on her lips, shining in her eyes, but it found not expression. It had not reached the ripeness which speaks, and it died with her, as an unborn babe with the mother that would have given it life. Is

it possible that it was love to me which, even in her last moments, glorified her beauty?

Did she love me — yes or no? Alas, I keep asking, and who shall give me an answer? She never had any secret from me. If indeed she loved me, that was the one secret, hidden surely to herself even, and she took it with her to the other life. . . .

As a dream I remember the days we spent at Bethlehem — a dream, though I hardly closed my eyes.

It was with difficulty that we obtained admittance to a small cottage bordering upon the great cloister gardens. There she lay, pale as a lily, beautiful to the last, even in death. And the paler she grew the deeper glowed the brightness of her wondrous eyes. It was as if the very star of Bethlehem she loved to think of had found a dwelling in her gaze. Nor was she white with that livid pallor which death casts on features in which his lingering touch has wrought havoc; it was rather a transparent whiteness glorifying morality and testifying against its victory far more loudly than health's rosiest bloom.

Night followed day, and day succeeded night, the time for us flowing unmeasured; I know not how it passed. The cloister bells kept ringing almost continuously, excruciating to my grief; for it seemed to me as though, with heartless voice, they were tolling out the life of my beloved. No one heeded us, but the prior one day sent some consecrated palm branches, which appeared to delight Lily. I fastened them above her couch.

As life ebbed away her unrest increased. She asked to be moved. She was too weak herself, and as a little child I lifted her in my arms, my mother smoothing the couch. Alas, it was the first time since she had

quitted childhood that I dared take her into my arms. And unconsciously, she clasped my neck to steady my hold. Oh, the touch of love! but how late it came, late because dying! I could not keep back my tears, and they fell on her upturned face.

"My friend," she said, amid heavenly smiles — my heart yet trembles at the memory — "tears, my friend, and I so happy? I do not suffer in the least, and soon, soon, it will all be over. There is but one thing grieving me. I long for the Paradise of God, my soul's home, where peace and joy await me. I shall soon be there — without you, Philip! But not for long. We shall be united again where there is no more parting."

Her voice was nearly inaudible, and her breathing troubled. As a spirit-whisper those words touched my ear:

"My friend," she resumed after a while, "how sweet it was to call you thus! Yes, Philip, I may tell you now, I loved that name for the best part of my life. . . . Yet there was a depth of meaning in it which I seemed not to fathom entirely, however much I endeavored to be true and loving to you. . . . I often felt you deserved a greater and fuller affection than I was able to give you . . . and yet those were happy moments when I tried to understand the high meaning of that sweet name. . . . But there seemed something hidden in it,— something I could not reach,— which, if I had it, would make happiness perfect. I have not found it. . . . I go to God now, and there, Philip, all will be given . . . we shall be calling each other *friend* in His presence to all eternity . . . the measure of happiness will be full!"

Her physical unease reached such a pitch that lying down became impossible. I took her into my arms, sitting down on the edge of her couch, her head leaning against my heart, and by degrees quietude returned.

I sat holding her, hour merging into hour; God alone knew what I suffered. She moved not — her eyes were closed; the slow faint breathing only, and the scarcely perceptible throbbing of her heart, showed that life had not yet fled. I held her hand in mine — cold, alas, already — and anxiously I watched the sinking pulse. I lived in its beating only, but oh, what hopeless living! The hand grew icy, the pulse becoming slower and slower; it could not last much longer.

Suddenly she raised her eyes, suffused with a light of unearthly kindling, and whispered gently, "My friend!" As a fleeting breath the words escaped her lips, but I understood them, with a holy kiss bending to her brow.

Again she moved her lips, but no further sound fell on my ear. She had told me once that she loved the habit of the ancient Church that joined a blessing to the Cross, and involuntarily I made the holy sign to her dying eyes.

She understood it, a smile glorifying her features as with a reflection of heaven's peace. Vision faded, the lids closing slowly. A gentle sigh, and she was gone. Lily's dead body rested against my heart.

Submission I knew not. The frail maiden had upheld me; she gone, strength and self-possession vanished. For days and weeks I was as one bereft of reason, a prey to devouring grief. But of that I speak not!

LETTER XXI.

It is long since I wrote to you. Repeatedly I have taken up the pen, but only to drop it again in despair. It seemed impossible to describe what I have seen. But it weighs upon the heart, urging me to tell you, however feebly. Having confided so much to you, I ought not to keep this crowning experience to myself. Listen, then, to what I have to impart to you in sorrow.

The great moment was fast drawing near. Darkness seemed being engulfed by the abyss more and more rapidly — light with us reaching its fulness in a transparent dawn; but far, far away, beyond the gulf, a great daybreak was bursting the confines of night. I knew the fair land of the blessed was about to be revealed. It was a wondrous radiance, increasing quickly, and transfusing the distant shore with hues of unknown and indescribable loveliness. In dreams only, or when yielding to the magic of music, a faint foretaste of glory may come to the human soul.

Hell seemed captivated, the whole of its existence culminating in an all-pervading sense of dread; millions of hungry-eyed souls drawn toward a self-same goal. Some like pillars of salt stood motionless, gazing into the brightening glow; others had sunk to their knees; others again, falling to the ground sought to hide their faces; while some in hopeless defiance refused to look. But I stood in fear and trembling, forgetful of all but the vision at hand.

And suddenly it seemed as if a great veil were rent asunder, torrents of light overflowing their banks, and

the wide heavens steeped in flame. A sigh bursting from untold millions of lost ones ended in a wail of sorrow that went quivering through the spaces of hell. I heard and saw no more. As one struck by lightning I had fallen on my face.

How long I lay thus confounded I know not; but when again I lifted my dazzled eyes, there was a clear, steady glow, a beneficent radiance that admitted of my looking into it, not blinding vision. Still I had to accustom my sight to it; it seemed a vast ocean of light that by degrees only assumed color and shape; dawning forth to the raptured gaze as a world of beauty and loveliness, such as eye has not seen and the mind is unable to grasp. But never for a moment did I doubt the reality. I knew it was the land of bliss, even Paradise, unfolding to my view. At first it seemed as though islands and distant shores grew visible in that sea of light, gentle harmonies of color floating about them. But gradually the scattered parts united, forming a perfect whole, a world of bliss immeasurably vast. Yet, infinite as it appeared, it formed but a single country — a garden abounding in blessing, in beauty, in delight. The loveliest spots on earth are as desert places in comparison. I have no other words to describe it. To do so fully and justly I had need to be an angel, and you know what I am — one who might have been an angel, but lost now and for ever undone.

Trembling with awe and enchantment I gazed into Paradise, deeper and deeper, encompassing, no doubt, thousands of miles. For, strange as the aspect was, the power of vision given was stranger still; my spirit seemed roaming through vast realms of glory, all their beauties laid bare to my tranced sense. I felt the balmy breezes, I heard the rustle of trees, the gentle cadence

of waters. It was given me to see every perfect fruit, every lovely flower, everp drop of dew reflecting the light. I saw, heard, felt, drank in the fill of beauty. There was music everywhere, speaking the language of nature glorified. Not a dewdrop sparkling, not a tree-top rustling, not a flower opening, but it swelled the heavenly psalm; all sounds floating together in harmony, wondrous and pure. As yet I saw no living soul; but songs of joy, of exultant praise, resounded everywhere, nature and spirit uniting in one perfect hymn. What shall I say, but that infinite bliss, unspeakable happiness, and heavenly peace, flashed delight into my soul with a thousand daggers of longing!

This then was Eden, I seemed all but in it, and yet how far — how far! Of all that glory not a ray of light for me, not a flower even, or a drop of dew! Ah, gracious heavens, not a drop of water — not a single tear!

But where were they, the souls whom no man hath counted, the saved ones, redeemed from the world? Not one of them I had seen as yet. The garden seemed as untrodden of human foot as on the day when Adam and Eve had been driven forth by him with the flaming sword. "Where are ye, my loved ones, if not in the heaven I see?" My heart cried out for them, longing, thirsting — Aunt Betty somehow rising first to my mind. Why she, I cannot tell, since there is another far nearer and dearer to my soul.

But while I thought of her, behold herself! Yes, there she was, I opening my sorrowful arms to clasp her; but, ah me, there is a great gulf fixed, and no passing across it! Yet I saw her, dear Aunt Betty — saw her as plainly as though I need but stretch forth my hand to draw her to my embrace. It was she, and yet

how changed! glorified to youth and beauty everlasting, the same to recognizing vision, but perfected, and spotless as the white raiment she wore. Some happy thought seemed moving in her as she walked the paths of content, crowned with a halo of peace. I saw she was happy; I saw it in the light of her eyes, in the smile hovering about her mouth; she had conquered, and sorrow and grief had vanished with the world.

I was deeply moved, to the pouring forth of my soul even in weeping; but what boots emotion if the eyes are a dried-up well! I thought of the love and self-forgetting kindness she had ever shown to me in the days of her life. Now only I knew how much she had been to me — now only I understood her. For — marvelous yet true — I not only saw her: I was permitted even to read her heart. All she had suffered — her every battling and victory — lay open to my view as a finished tale. Yes, I understood her as I had never done before. Long ago when she was young, my father had been a true brother to her in a time of bitter sorrow, offering her the shelter of his love when she found the world empty and cold. She had never forgotten that — her grateful heart vowing to him the remainder of her life in the service of sisterly devotion. She had kept that vow fully, fondly. That was the key to her life. And her beautiful sacrifice of love enriched not only my father, but all she could help and cherish, souls without number, of whom I was chief.

My father — Lily! my heart was reverting to both simultaneously. And oh, rapture!— I beheld them even now emerging from a shady grove. Aunt Betty seemed to be meeting them.

The sight of Lily was more than I could bear, a film overspreading my senses. It seemed at first as

though both had appeared but to vanish; but no — in perfect clearness and heavenly calm these beloved ones moved in my vision. Nothing of outward beauty, nor yet of the heart's secret history, being hid from me. Truly I had never known them, never seen them aright before.

O Lily! beautiful even on earth and of sweetest womanhood, but surpassingly beautiful in the fulness of Paradise. Mortal eye has not seen such loveliness glorified to transcendent charm. Nay, human imagination is too poor to reach even to the hem of her garment. "Holy and sanctified!" seemed to be written in her every feature, surrounding her with a halo of praise. It spoke from her crown of glory, from the palm of victory she carried, from her robe of righteousness whiter than snow. And as she lifted her shining eyes, it was as though their gaze enfolded me; I trembled and glowed, as a flickering flame touched by a kindling breath. And that angel smile of perfect bliss accompanying the look seemed meant for me — even me. But that was illusion. None of them can see us here — thank God! I saw her; she was near me in spirit vision, but in truth she was far, far away; and the blessed ones in Paradise are saved from the thought of hell and its every horror. Yet the separating gulf does not separate me from her inmost thought. Woe is me! shall I weep, or dare I rejoice? I can read in her pious heart as in an open book? Ah me, what do I read? I see it — see it as in clearest writing that she loved me with all her soul — truly, if unconsciously, with the deepest purest giving of virgin bride. Ay more, she loves me still! she is thinking of me, longing for me with a longing as painless as pure. For it is in hell only that pain and grief are known.

What more can I say? Hopelessness, my daily portion, is as a blazing fire feeding on my soul, sometimes sinking in ashes, but never dying. At that moment of sweetest, bitterest conviction, the flame seemed fostered by denial, the very essence of hell. Bliss and delight veering round to despair, my whole miserable existence flared up in an all-consuming agony.

"See what might have been yours, but you have lost it — lost!" was the ever-recurring cry of my tortured soul. Can you wonder that I hardly heeded my good pious father who walked beside her, sharing her felicity?— that I cannot remember a single word passing between them — nay, heard not for very anguish? Had I been quiet to listen, no doubt I would have heard mention of my name, might have heard them speak of me in heavenly tenderness. But, having seen Lily, and read in her very heart the assurance that she loved me, I heard and saw no more. "See what might have been yours, but you have lost it — lost!" I writhed in despair. Vain was my effort to lift eyes to her once more — I could not — could not! And with a cry of horror I fell back upon myself.

LETTER XXII.

SINCE you heard from me last — and there seems to have been a longer pause than usual — I have roamed about in aimless adventure.

There are no accurate means of estimating either distance in hell, or the speed of our travels; I expect that both are astounding. Time and space here can only be spoken of in an abstract sort of way, as existing in thought merely. Consequently there are hardly two souls amongst us that would agree concerning the measure of either. But that holds true of anything.

Since everything, then, is imaginary, unanimity is merely accidental, and what is called harmony on earth is not to be found here. That a number of souls by social instinct, and under force of habit, should unite at a given place for a given object by no means is proof of concord. For concord presupposes liberty, whereas such souls are under downright compulsion, and, apart from the instinct which drives them in a common direction, nowise at unity among themselves.

My roamings, then, are no free-will undertaking. Whenever I feel especially miserable and desponding, there is a sense of relief in dashing about blindly with no other object but that of moving. Blindly, I say — meaning heedless of obstacles; pushing through walls, mountains, houses, trees — through living creatures even if they are in my way. The latter, of course, is not altogether pleasant; fancy rushing through man or beast in your aimless hurry! But one gets used to everything here. "Oh, distracted soul!" your neigh-

bor cries, and is satisfied you should pass. We are always suiting ourselves to circumstances, you see. Are you surprised that I should yield to such madness of motion? True, every one here has his or her congenial abode; so have I, leading, as you know, a sickening life. But I am helpless once the frenzy seizes me, unhinging my very existence, and away I hie me, as driven by despair.

Yes, that it is — despair and nothing else, engendering a need, amounting to passion almost, of trying to escape from oneself, or at least to stupefy oneself.

Neither the one nor the other is possible; in the world one succeeds at times, never in hell. But that knowledge does not restrain me; again and again I perceive the utter uselessness of endeavor, pulling up suddenly, perhaps, to find myself in the strangest of places.

And more horribly strange, more dismal than any, is the place from which I lately returned. As a maddened fool I felt driven thither; as a maddened fool I hurried back, utterly confounded.

I suppose every soul here is forced to perform that journey once at least; and in so far it might not unaptly be called a pilgrimage, but to a frightful shrine. Whether it is on account of a certain inexplicable mania possessing us all sooner or later, or merely by dint of a dread attraction exercised by that awful place, I know not; but no one escapes the fate of going thither once, if not oftener. You know what a crowd is drawn by a public execution, and that people *will* assist at so dire a spectacle unless positively prohibited. It is strange! But what you should say if anyone by morbid attraction had a longing to watch his own execution? Something very like this takes place here.

You are aware by this time, and must be so, apart

from my inadequate account, that between this evil place and Paradise a great gulf is fixed. Great, I say, and would add frightful, but that words invented for earth's need are altogether unfit to describe that gulf. It is the home of Satan. Do you understand that? In the depth of that abyss the quenchless fire is burning forever, tended by the devil and his host. How far away is it? I cannot tell; I think it is in the utmost limit of hell. How near one may approach it? Even at a distance of hundreds of miles one feels seized with giddiness and all the horrors of death; but one is drawn nevertheless. That one should ever escape it again seems marvellous. How wide the gulf is? When lit up by the radiance of Paradise, the eye at a leap seems to carry you across, but I doubt not it may be likened to a shoreless ocean.

Light now is fast decreasing, swallowed up by the darkness rising afresh from the abyss. Do you expect me to describe to you that abode of terror? But I can no more depict it than I was able to give a true representation of Paradise. It is beyond human possibilities, and I am but human, even in hell. Yet one thing I may tell you; believe me, that more than one rich man is to be found by the awful pit, looking across to where they see the blessed poor in Abraham's bosom, stretching forth their arms too, and entreating for a drop of water to cool their tongue. But that first rich man of the gospel does not appear to be among them; there is a rumor that perchance he was saved.

Alas! I was among those begging rich, supplicating with all my soul, but no one — no one heard me. Despair urged me to fling myself into the awful gulf, that perchance I might lose myself amid the howling fiends of the bottomless pit. What power prevented

me, and eventually brought me back from the place, I know not. Is it possible that God in His mercy is yet keeping me?

I have returned then, dreading I shall be carried thither a second time. I must tell you more, though it be a subject of horror both to you and to me; but then all these revelations are fraught with horror, and these letters had better remain unread by those whose self-complacent tranquillity of mind dislikes being harassed.

As I returned shivering in every fibre, and conscious of the thought only of Satan and his angels, I all but fell into the arms of one coming towards me on his way to the gulf.

But was it a human being, this creature with mangled body and frightfully disfigured countenance? A man indeed, his very appearance bespeaking his name — Judas Iscariot.

A piece of rope was round his neck, and in his hand he carried thirty pieces of silver. The rope all but suffocates him, and the money burns his fingers; he keeps throwing it away, but it always returns to his grasp. I have heard that it may be absent awhile swelling some usurper's gains; but Judas before long finds it in his closed hand again, bearing the marks of blood. And then he is heard to groan, "What is that to us? see thou to that!" — a fruitless repentance, which is not repentance, eating away at his soul, and he spends himself in vain efforts to get behind some one and seize him by the neck.

What he intends by this is not quite clear; but people think he is anxious to find a charitable soul who will give him back the kiss he once gave to his Lord and Master, and thereby free him from those horrible

HE KEEPS THROWING IT AWAY

pieces of silver. But the soul lives not in hell who would care to save him at the cost even of a kiss; he is an object of repugnance to every one. I too burst away from him horrified.

I came across a scrap of newspaper the other day, and my eye was caught by an advertisement offering "bridal bouquets and funeral wreaths in great variety." And just beneath it a stationer expressed his willingness to sell hand-painted cards for the menu of wedding breakfasts and "In Memoriam" of the dead. Such is life, I said; side by side grow the flowers for the adorning of brides and the crowning of corpses. Better sometimes the latter than the former; better to be clasped in the embrace of death than find love dying before its time.

Memorial cards! how touching and — how cheap! How we love to speak of the virtues of our departed ones, mourning them ostentatiously, and assuring the world we shall miss them forever. Forever? Look into your own heart, my friend, and expect not to be remembered too long when you are gone. Love's wreaths will fade on your grave, and the night-winds alone will keep up their moaning around.

What is this buzzing about me like troublesome flies — memories?

I once had taken a youth into my service. He was a kind of legacy of Aunt Betty's, and for her sake I intended to be kind to him. But somehow I was always finding fault with him. There are people who rouse our evil nature, for no reason one can see. Poor fellow! — perhaps he was not over bright, though he tried his best. But patience was not one of my virtues.

I scolded him almost continuously, taking a kind of satisfaction I believe in thus revenging myself on what I considered his stupidity. I well remember the many hard words I flung at him, provoked from bad to worse by his meek sorrowful countenance. At last I said I could not bear his fool's face any longer and gave him warning. I did help him to another place, where I fancy he was more kindly used than with me. But it was a disheartening beginning for one who had to make his way in service; and he had deserved better at my hands. When he had left me I discovered all sorts of little proofs of his touching fidelity and grateful disposition. How badly I had rewarded the poor fellow for such golden qualities!

It could not be called a great matter, but it left a sting.

My town residence had the rare amenity of a little garden; it was shut in at the farther end by a blind wall forming the back of a humble dwelling in the rear. But the wall was not quite blind; it had one little window not far from the ground — to my notion, the one eye of the house which kept looking into my privacy. I had no need to think so, for behind that window sat a poor seamstress who had something more to do than watch my movements. True, she would now and then look up from her needle, as if she delighted in my garden; and she even dared sometimes to put her head out of window to enjoy the fragrance of my flowers. There could be no harm in that, but I disliked it. And availing myself of the letter of the law, I ran up a paling a few feet from the wall.

The right of doing so was mine, but it was very wrong. The poor creature had delighted in my garden, the proximity of which had helped her through

many a joyless day. She loved flowers, and the sight of green things was grateful to her hard-worked eyes. There was a few thrushes in the garden and she was cheered by their song. My fence was simply cruel, depriving her not only of these enjoyments, but of fresh air as well, and of the light she sorely needed — I had shut her out from her share of the sky.

I had acted heedlessly, and I came to see it before long; good-nature even was stirred, and I actually resolved to make amends. I went round to the back street, but was too late; the poor girl had been obliged to leave her little room, over which the struggles of ten lonely years had thrown a halo of home.

Neither was this a great matter; but little things make up the sum of good or evil in life. I feel sore at heart.

I had gone out riding one day; it was in the country, and I intended to look up a farmer in a small village, but did not know his house from the surrounding homesteads. The place seemed asleep in the noonday sun, not a youth within hail to whom I might have thrown the bridle. Looking about, I saw an open cottage-door and the figure of a young girl appearing on the threshhold; I called her and she promised to mind the animal, seeming half shy, half ready to please me.

I went on my business, and, returning, came upon an interesting spectacle. The mare had become unmanageable; the young girl could hardly hold her, feeling evidently distressed by the creature's pranks. Her efforts to subdue its gambols served as an admirable foil to her figure; her every movement was charming, and her pretty face reflected so delightfully both fear and vexation, that instead of hastening to her assistance,

I stood still behind a shrub watching complacently what I considered an exquisite scene.

There was no danger involved. The mare was not vicious — only frolicsome; but the rustic beauty did not understand that, and was evidently frightened, holding fast by the bridle, jumping now right, now left, her lithe figure following the capering animal. It was merely to ingratiate herself with the damsel that the mare tossed its head, plunging again as if to snap at her kerchief, which now slipped from her shoulders revealing the whitest of necks. And behold, the masses of golden hair escaped their confinement falling in a shower of ringlets as though to veil her charms. Her distress increased visibly, a deep glow mantling her features, her bosom heaving. Now on tiptoe, now curving her outstretched arms, bending this way, bending that, she delighted me with her graceful movements.

But there was a sudden end to my enjoyment. She caught sight of me, and I was obliged to approach. Had she let go the mare, it would have been no more than I deserved; but she held on faithfully till I was near enough to take hold of the bridle myself. There she stood burning with shame and anger, her eyes brimming with tears. Before I mounted I endeavored to slip half-a-crown into her hand; but she turned from me proudly, the coin rolling at my feet.

Surely no great matter. I had wronged the girl, by being unkind to her, while revelling in the sight of her beauty; but she came to no harm. On the contrary, I have a sort of conviction that the little adventure proved a useful lesson, teaching her to beware of admiring fops.

Nevertheless, memories will not be silenced. Justice

is the law of life, be it in the world, or in heaven, or in hell; and every act of man, though it contain but a shadow of wrong, calls for atonement, unless God Himself in His mercy will blot it out.

I know it now — I know it — who shall free me from even such guilt?

Do you see that tree? Often and often I sink down beneath it with groans of regret, for on its branches are gathered the opportunities of a wasted life. They keep falling down on me, ready to crush me. I am often driven thither by the lashes of the awful Inevitable. How happy I might have been, how much I might have done in the days of golden possibility.

But I would not! As a blind man I walked in life, careless of light. It is dark now, but I can see — I do see — the failure of my days.

LETTER XXIII.

If memory takes me to the Holy Land now, I seem to roam through its length and breadth as a broken-hearted pilgrim questioning every spot for the Saviour of men, but unable to find Him, with whom there is forgiveness of sin. In the blessed days I spent there actually, peace was offered me daily, hourly; but I was too much engrossed with my own vain thoughts to be anxious for the unspeakable gift. An angel of God walked beside me, whose influence over me was marvelous. Lily's faith and piety were as sunbeams to my heart; I felt the vivifying touches, and more than once was near yielding up my sinful being, my life and all, for so precious a Saviour — her Saviour — who was ready to be mine; but at the decisive moment self-love, writhing in agony, shot up within me as a flame of hell, blinding the eyes. I saw not Him, but only a fair girl by my side — the aim of my earthly hopes and all but mine already, who, alas, should soon cost me the hardest of all conflicts, even a wrestling with death.

O Galilee, thou land of beauty! How fine is the contrast between Judæa, dark, wild, and waste, and thine own fair, genial tracts. And of all places none more sublime than Mount Tabor. In glorious solitude it rises from the broad expanse, lifting a precipitous front north, south, east, and west. Clothed to the top with woods and shrubberies, its evergreen oaks and pines seem to vie in beauty. And the place is rich in aromatic plants. Never anywhere have I met such

freshness — such exuberance of nature. From the south only the mount is accessible, a path winding to the very summit, revealing fresh charms of landscape at every turn; and rising from the sunburnt plain, you enter regions of air more pure and balmy than you ever dreamt of. The way is longer than you expected, but repays you amply; and as you reach the summit behold a tableland of some three miles in circumference, an expanse of richest greensward and splendid groups of trees. You enter this retreat of beauty by a ruined gate in the west. Remains of enclosures and turrets, of grottoes and cisterns, meet the eye at every turn — memorials of a mysterious past which tell of an encampment or even a city that may have stood here. But now peace has her dwelling there, if anywhere in the world, with a sense of security and calm. No wonder that Peter exclaimed: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

We had begun the ascent towards evening, and though it was but March the day had been oppressively hot; it was like a deep draught of refreshment, therefore, to reach the cool balmy height. We felt as though admitted into Paradise. Just before sunset we gained the top; and finding ourselves unexpectedly upon that glorious tableland, commanding so boundless a view, a deep silence fell upon us — the whole of Galilee, nay, the greater part of the Holy Land, at our feet!

I looked towards Lily, for it was through her that the best of impressions at all times reached me. The setting sun was weaving a halo about her, casting a roseate glow on her beauty, which more than ever looked as though it were not of earth. I had often

felt this, but never so fully before. And the glory of earth and sky about us seemed as nothing, compared to the uplifting radiance that spoke to me from Lily's face. She stood wrapt in worshipping delight.

Bear with me, my friend, if I seem lengthy, carrying thee back again and again to scenes dead and gone. It may seem foolish in a poor lost one like me, but even that is not of my choice! I am forever driven back upon my own past, and what was happiness then is misery now — ay, hopeless despair.

Towards the north we looked away over the hills of Galilee to the snowy peaks of Lebanon and the regions of Damascus. Nestling at our feet were the little towns of Galilee, Cana, Nazareth, and Nain, with their holy memories. Westward lay the plain of Esdraelon, steeped in charm, with Carmel beyond, and the sea suffused with the light of the setting sun. Brook Kison, winding through the valley like a ribbon of sheen, guides the eye to the headland overhanging the Mediterranean. Turning to the east your gaze is captured by the beauty of Lake Gennesareth, with the small town of Tiberias, now in ruins. Not far off is Capernaum, and beyond the lake the desert where Christ fed the multitude. To the south are Mount Hermon and the hills of Samaria. Farther still, beyond Jericho, the lonely height where the Son of God fasted and was tempted by Satan. Your eye wanders away over Jordan to Bethabara, where John baptized; over the Red Sea to Mount Nebo, in the land of the Moabites, where Moses died; and in the distant haze you descry the boundless desert of Arabia.

The sun was sinking — nay, it fell into the sea, glowing like a ball of flame, and sudden darkness overspread the land. But our people had been busy; a

tent was ready to receive my mother and Lily, for we intended to spend the night on Tabor. Our mules enjoyed their liberty and the succulent grass. A fire had been lit with odoriferous branches of cedar, and a simple supper was being prepared. Every hand was busy, excepting the Turks, our escort, who looked on, lazily contemplative, enjoying their evening hookah. Those sunset scenes making ready for the night, how soothing they had always been to my restless soul! But that evening on the Mount in Galilee was one of the last restful evenings I knew on earth.

When darkness had set in we lit more fires and placed the necessary outposts, for nowhere in the Holy Land is one safe from an attack of Bedouins. But it was easy to secure our position here; the place was a fortress in itself.

Having retired within the tent, we passed an hour by the subdued glow of a lamp, Lily presently taking her Bible and reading to us the story of the Transfiguration. Her voice to me was ever as "a cool hand laid on an aching brow," sufficient in itself to attune my soul to worship. I listened, anxious to listen. Yet it was but as a transient breath of even in a sultry atmosphere; my spirit soon would flag, fluttering helplessly, and unable to rise.

"Do you feel comfortable, Lily?" said I, on wishing her good-night.

"O yes," she replied, with one of her happy smiles; "I should like to live and die here."

I knew from her manner, and her eyes told me, that she had more to say. I bent my ear, and she whispered:

"Do not forget to say your prayers, Philip, on ly-

ing down to-night! Remember that our Lord prayed here for you also!"

A breath of life to touch me — my soul raised her wings. I went out deeply moved.

My couch was prepared just outside the tent. I laid myself down wrapped in a burnous; but not to dispose myself to sleep at once. I must say my prayers. A prayer from the heart I think I had not known since the days of my childhood. Of late I had been trying, but always felt that something was wanting — alas, not merely something, but *the* thing that constitutes prayer — uplifting the heart toward God. I really endeavored to collect my thoughts, but hither and thither they roamed against my will. It seemed vain for me to fold my hands, to move my lips — the spirit of prayer was absent. And yet I could not think of sleeping without first having prayed! Stillness seemed to have settled within the tent; but I, outside, could not rest me and be still. I looked up, wakeful, toward the starry sky. It seemed so near; but there was no peace in that feeling. It oppressed me — the enclosing firmament was like a prison. The voices of night began to work on my fancy, and restlessness fevered my blood. There were sounds all about me — wild boars breaking through the brushwood, and jackals howling in the plain; the call of a night-bird in the trees mingled with the strange gruntings of the sleeping Turks, who in dreamful unease added their share to the concert of discord that filled my ear.

It was midnight. My repeater announced it as clearly as a church bell, I thought. I tossed impatiently, gazing into the dying embers. There was something quieting in the sinking glow — it held me still. And presently I thought I heard Lily's voice,

reading how the Saviour was transfigured on the Mount. Yea, and I saw Him standing between Moses and Elias in heavenly glory. Upon that vision I closed my eyes. And behold my soul had been praying! The spirit, freed for a moment from the trammels of the flesh, had risen to Him. I could sleep now, and slept quietly till dawn.

The glow was deepening on the heights of Ashtaroth, beyond the sea of Galilee, as I approached the northern slope. I was standing by a choked-up cistern, awaiting the yet veiled glory with eyes riveted on the eastern sky, when a light figure came up behind me. It was Lily, quietly putting her arm within mine. We spoke not, but together we gazed toward the far shore of morning that overflowed with light. How sacred was its calm!

But now the sun appeared, a well-spring of splendor, flashing from height to height, and setting a halo on Carmel: for the west lay steeped in wonder, and the sea caught every sparkling beam.

"O, Philip, surely this is the beauty of holiness," whispered Lily; "let us praise the Lord!" I had no words, but wrapped my burnous about her, for a cold wind swept the Mount.

The valleys lay yet hidden in mist and darkness, but there seemed a fluttering movement in the cloudy coverlet — a sudden rent, and through it appeared a shining cupola and the white glittering walls of a little town, like a revelation from another world.

"Nazareth!" cried Lily, in happy surprise. "O Philip, look! we have it all here; sweet gracious Nazareth and holy Tabor. He humbled Himself, yet was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased."

She only said *He* as the thought of Him moved in

her heart, filling her soul. I had no need to ask her meaning. How wide were her sympathies, how keen her perception of beauty, but her deepest life owned Him Lord, and Him alone.

The sun having fully risen, we walked back to the tent.

"It is here He was transfigured," said Lily, presently, stopping short and looking about her with reverential awe; "but not yet had He accomplished what He had come to do — the will of His Father, to the death, even on the Cross. Not yet had He drunk the bitter cup — Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha! But here for a moment He was uplifted into the glory that awaited Him at the right hand of God; and thus strengthened He went forth to the humiliation and suffering that lay before Him. Philip," she added, "is not this a holy example for all God's children? We, too, have a path of sorrow to tread, many a trial to go through; but we, too, may have a foretaste of the joy to come, the perfect liberty promised, and it may help us to reach the end. Without this grace divine many a burdened soul might fail on the road, for life seems hard at times. We have been strengthened by a vision on this mount; . . . my heart is very full. My spirit rejoices; . . . let me join in the new song to the glory of the Lamb!"

Was that Lily? Yet it was not for the first time she had spoken out of the fulness that moved her. Every day of late had made her more fit for heaven; even I saw it. But I trembled at the inward beauty she unfolded, which seemed one with her ardent desire to go behind the veil.

"I cannot help telling you, dear," she continued, clinging to me for support. "I feel as if I could not

breathe again down there in the everyday world. It is a happy feeling, yet fraught with pain. I do not say I would give the rest of my life, but I would give much for a few quiet days up here!"

"Would it really make you happy, Lily?" said I, sadly.

"Oh yes, Philip, and well too! I seem to breathe easier, and my heart is free."

"Well, then, ask mother about it. I am satisfied with whatever pleases you, sweetest Lily."

The mountain seemed astir now, and the encampment full of life. Our people were wide awake, Turks and all; some making coffee, others baking cakes of wheat or maize on heated stones; others again tending the animals or polishing their arms. The Turks looked on complacently. Having accomplished their matutinal devotions, they lighted their pipes and allowed others to do the work. But there was life too beyond the camp — herds of goats browsing far and near. A cool wind played about the tree-tops, and the flowers looked more gay in the light of morning.

My mother raised no objection to Lily's desire; she had been strangely ready of late to humor her, from a feeling perhaps that we should not have her much longer.

So we remained, and we all liked it. It was, to tell the truth, a charming mode of spending a few days — camping gipsy fashion on so lovely a spot, high above the work-a-day world, with a view over all the land — the Holy Land — in the purest of atmospheres, amid scenes of nature, rich, balmy, and fragrant as Eden itself, and in absolute calm. It was a time of blessing, truly. And Lily revived; there was no troubled beating of the heart, no sudden throbbing of the

pulse — I knew, for often would I hold the dear little hand quietly nestling within mine — no tell-tale flushes dying away in pallor. Her face wore a delicate bloom. I almost believed in the wonder-working power of the sacred Mount. I was myself again, casting fears to the wind, and adding my share to the happiness of the moment.

In the course of the forenoon pilgrims of every hue and nation arrived, with cripples and sufferers in the rear. Fortunately, our encampment was at some distance from the actual sanctuary, which saved us from being overrun. It was a sad and almost sickening sight; but Lily did not think so. On the contrary, she was all sympathy, yearning to help where she could. To the poor she offered money, to the sick medicine, the comfort of a helpful word to all. Love trembled in her eyes, gathering sweetly at her lashes. How beautiful she was, her dress half eastern and altogether charming; how lovely she looked, gliding about from one miserable pilgrim to another; and they all understood her, knowing never a word of her language!

Towards evening I received a visit from the chief who had undertaken to be responsible for our safety from Nazareth to Samaria. He had been hunting on the Mount, and was now coming with a splendid retinue to pay his respects to me, and present me with a wild boar he had killed. Of course I had to return the compliment, and indeed his attention to me was worthy of an acknowledgment. True, he robbed me of the precious evening I had intended to spend alone with my mother and Lily, instead of which I now was obliged to play the amiable host, presiding at an extemporized feast. I did my best — in conversation too, which, helped on by a dragoman, was a patron of flow-

ery speeches. One comfort was left — Lily watched use from the distance, and seemed intensely amused. The Emir on quitting expressed himself highly sensible of my attempts to do him honor; and with thankworthy politeness he pitched his camp half-way down the Mount, leaving the upper domain to ourselves.

But enough! It is no healthy craving that urges me to enlarge upon this sort of thing amid the horrors of hell. You may turn for the rest of it to Chateaubriand or Lamartine if you like. Fool! — fool that I am, even in the realms of death!

LETTER XXIV.

ADVENTURES of all kinds are of daily occurrence here, but they are void of interest. Like everything else in hell they mock us with emptiness — mere shadows of things left behind.

Not long ago, at a lonesome spot, a young woman flung herself into my arms, not for love of me, but for horror of another. She was being pursued, and a sensation of fear, natural to her sex, startled her into a show of weakness. It was foolish in her; she might have known that she could not really be harmed, and that whatever cause of fear there might be, I had no power to help her. But such things will happen here; we live in the notions brought hither from the world, no matter how clearly we see them to be meaningless. It was quite conceivable, then, that the tender creature I held in my arms should have been sufficiently distressed to seek the protection of my manhood.

I gave her time to recover herself, and then inquired into the nature of her alarm. She lifted a pair of eyes to me, tenderly trustful, like a turtle dove's, but trembling afresh, as if the very question were too much for her shy and gentle disposition. However, she found courage to reply:

"He is always after me. I do not know his name — he is seeking for Beatrice. He fancies I am she."

I knew at once whom she meant. That man is one of the public characters in hell, if I may say so. It is an ill-chosen expression, but descriptive terms acquired in the world are apt to be inadequate here. In

hell all are public, yet none is so in the sense you would attach to that word. What I mean to convey is simply this, that the man she spoke of is known throughout the regions of hell, pointed at by young and old; and that wherever he goes he is mocked with his own constant cry: "Where is Beatrice? Can any one tell me where to find her?" This question is for ever in his mouth. Beatrice seems his one thought, and the getting hold of her his mania. He is convinced she must be in hell; "for," says he — but let me cast a veil over the poor girl's history. Enough that he seeks her with such brutish eagerness as I have not known even in this place. But he looks for her in vain. He is one of the most repulsive beings I have met, and that, surely, means a good deal here. He must be vice personified, all human feelings burnt out of him; nothing remaining but the one wild inhuman passion that has possessed him. And then the horrible wounds disfiguring his body, his life-blood for ever gushing through every one of them! He is a refuse of the vilest in hell. No wonder that the poor shamefaced creature was filled with horror at the sight of him.

"Then you are not Beatrice?" I said.

"No," she replied, with the meekest of looks. "I am Emily."

Our acquaintance did not proceed farther on that occasion; but I somehow felt sure I should meet her again.

Having left her for the present, I could not but occupy my mind with her. How was it possible, I thought, that such a creature as this Emily should have come to hell? She seemed an image of fairest womanhood. True, beauty alone is no safeguard; on the contrary, some of the most favored in this respect would

seem to be here. But her utter gentleness and simple-hearted sweetness — her modest bearing — must be genuine, I thought. A veil of purity seemed to be cast about her, despising dissimulation. There was a grace not only in her face and figure, but in her every movement, that might well claim to be the garment of an innocent soul. And then, so young,— a very child to the world, surely. She might be nineteen, but one would hardly credit even that. I saw she had been married, for she wore a ring; but she looked hardly grown-up. Now, the true simplicity of innocence is admired by the most worldly even — how justly so may be inferred from the fact that it does not exist here. It is rare on earth; but some women seem to preserve the heart of childhood in spite of the promptings of the flesh and the devil. Emily, to all appearance, seemed to be one of these chosen few. As a grown child she looked whose feet could never have been soiled with the mire of the world. How, then, did she come to wake in hell? Involuntarily I thought of the awful truth that the heart is unclean by nature, no matter what graces may twine about it, and though its lot be cast in the fairest of paths.

I met her again before long, and, unnoticed by her, watched her at leisure. She sat apart, deeply engrossed, and offering a sight both attractive and singular. Her attire was of cloister-like simplicity, utterly white, the ample folds enveloping her slender form,— purely white from top to toe, without a shadow of coloring, and contrasting strangely with the surrounding darkness. One thing only seemed wanting to crown the indescribable gracefulness of her appearance with the perfection of beauty — peace — which, of course, she had not. Her delicately shaped hands moved busily

in her lap. I discovered, after a while, that a precious necklace occupied her attention, the pearls of which she kept counting, now beginning at one end, now at the other, but always stopping at the center, and dropping it again to wring her hands. I fancied I saw tears in her eyes; but that of course was not so.

I moved up to her presently.

"Are you *la dame blanche?*" I said.

It was a stupid question, since there are so many ladies owning this title.

But she only shook her head, saying: "No, I am Emily Fleming."

"Fleming and Sparkman?" I ejaculated, surprised, naming a highly respected firm.

She nodded, heaving a deep sigh. What could she mean? Was she some member of a well-known family?

But she, meanwhile, had replaced the pearls on her neck, sitting motionless with folded hands. I hasten to add that no one ever succeeds here in folding hands aright — that also is of the past. She appeared lost in sorrowful thought.

"Poor child!" I cried, "you seem very unhappy."

"Yes — yes, I am," she sobbed. "I have sustained a loss which I can never make good."

"What is it you have lost, poor Emily?"

"A pearl — a pearl," she murmured, wringing her white little hands.

"A pearl!" I echoed — a slight thing, surely, to be cast into hell for. And yet there are goodly pearls! Was not there a man who sold all he had that he might buy one pearl of great price?

"Well, perhaps you may find it again," I said, anxious to be kind; but it was foolish.

"Do you think so?" she said, brightening. "But, alas! I have sought for it for years and years."

The memory of a promise seemed hovering about me, that those who seek shall find; but I could not shape the words, and only said vaguely:

"If you have sought so long already you may be all the nearer the finding."

It was the vainest of speeches, but it broke down the reserve about her heart. She seemed to trust me, and before long she told me the history of her life. It cost her a real effort to do so — I saw that well enough; but the longing to unburden oneself is irresistible with us. And, moreover, the veil of secrecy is always being lifted here from every soul.

"You seem to be acquainted with the house of Fleming and Sparkman," she began; "perhaps the present heads of the firm were known to you. But my history takes me back — ah, let me see — for seven generations. How long it seems!"

"As a light-hearted girl of sixteen I became the bride of Robert Fleming, and he brought me, a happy young wife, to the old family house. On the day we were married he gave me a precious necklace, worth a man's ransom, as the saying is. And before fastening it on my neck he spoke to me about every pearl in particular, adding a meaning to their value, which comes back to me now with terrible force. "The large blue pearl in the center — a gem rather," he said —"signifies your wedded troth; the deep red one your true love; and that white one your innocence. The lesser pearls on both sides make up the number of wifely virtues — each pearl for a grace — and there are many you see. And that which holds them together, making them your

own precious adornment, is chastity and womanly honor."

"With his own hand he fastened the costly gift on my neck. His words had impressed me but slightly; I was young and delighted in the splendid ornament. But, alas! the time came when I could but remember them in tears. . . . Look at my necklace! The pearls are all there, but the central gem is missing. And the loss of that pearl has ruined me.

"Did I love my husband? I do not know what to say honestly. Perhaps I did not love him as I might have loved another. But I must own that wedded life at first seemed happy; he loved me, and two sweet little babies crowned our union.

"All went well till a friend of my husband's entered our house — a man as false as fair. I cannot tell how it was, but he cast a spell over me. Was it that I loved him? The affection I felt for my husband was quite different, and I am sure it was true; but he somehow had never waked in me the intoxicating rapture which that other one called forth. I felt it welling up in flames of fire whenever he came near me. Was it madness? was it witchery? I think it was a power of evil seizing upon the heated blood rather than on the mind or heart. It worked as a subtle poison; but though a poison it was very sweet. In vain I struggled against it. Yet I can hardly say that I struggled, for although I knew those feelings to be evil, I loved to dally with them, and the will to conquer was in abeyance.

"Being alone with him one day, he caught me in his arms. I offered no real resistance. I felt overtaken, and a sensation as of swooning seemed uppermost. Yet I must have made some involuntary move-

ment of escaping from his hold; for the string of my necklace giving way suddenly, the pearls rolled hither and thither about the apartment. That brought me back to myself. It was as though an invisible hand were attempting to part us. We started asunder.

"Yes, we had been sobered all at once, reality staring us in the face. I drew myself up, requesting his immediate departure, and he obeyed. I was anxious to look for my pearls, and happily I found them all, one only remaining lost, the blue one of wedded troth. Alas! how earnestly I sought for it, morning, noon, and night, but it had disappeared as by magic. I succeeded in keeping the fact from my husband for some time, and I permitted no foot save mine to enter the fatal room. I sought and sought, but the precious pearl was lost. And at last there was a day when my husband saw that it was gone. It was a terrible moment! He said little, but from that hour a gloom rested on his brow, which spoke more loudly than words could have done. I understood it—"Thy troth is broken, thy purity lost; thou art no more for me!"

"The false friend also seemed stirred in conscience; he kept away. How it was with him I know not, but in me the fire had been kindled which burned with a hidden flame. My heart had conceived sin, and the wicked image would not be banished. I strove against it feebly; it was stronger than I. My inward gaze followed him spellbound; and with him was my every thought. Even in dreams I was his. Sin had gained an ascendency over me, and I yielded helplessly in the secret chamber of my heart. And yet that heart had been pure before it knew him, and evil thoughts had never assailed it. Alas, how little is needed to murder innocence! The white robe of my soul was soiled.

One only could have restored it to cleanness,— He who would not condemn the woman that was a sinner. But for Him I looked not, grovelling as I lay at the feet of an idol.

"I fell ill, and even in illness my folly was upon me, burning within. The wild fancies of fever must have laid bare my inmost soul to my husband. My last thoughts on earth clung to that sinful moment that robbed me of my pearl. I was the prey of death — life vanished, and, lifting my eyes again, I found consciousness returning in the torment of hell. I have come to own the justice. . . ."

There was a pause of silence, and then Emily continued:

"Do you know what it is to go back as a restless spirit to the upper world? No? Then you are a stranger happily to a cruel law ruling some of us here. *I* could not rest in hell; go back I must to seek my pearl. I have been seeking — seeking — these centuries past, but it is hopelessly lost. . . .

"I cannot tell you what I felt on first returning, a disembodied soul, to my former home. I trembled as one on forbidden ground.

"Not a corner of the big old house I left unhaunted; in passages and rooms, from cellar to garret, I have been looking for my pearl, spreading terror everywhere. But the horror seems to recoil upon me, filling me with fear and trembling. Every inmate of that house, at one time or another, has seen the white lady looking for something with a lamp. I am more dreaded than the nearness of death itself. One old servant only of the present household seems able to bear the sight of me. He has seen me so often that I believe he has got used to me; he folds his hands in silent prayer, and heeds

me not. It happens sometimes that we meet and meet again in the long dusky passages, he following his business, I bent on mine, with that difference between us, that he walks in confidence and I in despair. But it comforts my poor trembling heart to come upon his well-known figure in the lonely halls. I have known him from his youth upward, watched him doing his duty in uprightness of soul. His hair is white now and his figure stooping; but the nearer death he seems, the more courageous he looks, and the greater his fearlessness in meeting me. He alone appears to feel no horror at my approach, nor need he. I have as little power to harm him as he has to stop me. I can only look for my pearl!

"I hasten to the well-known chamber. This is the spot where for one fatal moment I yielded my soul to sin and was lost in consequence. Here it was that my jewel vanished. Here, then, I seek most anxiously and with indescribable longing. But the pearl need not be here; some one may have found it and taken it away. That is why I search the house, every chamber and every closet, peeping into my lady's jewel-case, and into the work-box of the humblest servant-maid. It is chiefly among the women of the household that I look for the gem I lost.

"I flit through corridors. One of them since time immemorial has been used as a picture gallery. Here I find the lifelike image of the husband I so cruelly wronged. I dare not lift my eyes to it, yet I seem rooted to the ground there for hours. I keep thinking, might there not be an expression in his face,— the shadow even of an expression,— promising forgiveness and restoration? But I dare not look for it; I creep away, guilt trailing behind me.

HE FOLDS HIS HANDS IN SILENT PRAYER, AND HEEDS ME NOT. ....

"Guilt and shame, for my own picture hangs by the side of his, filling the measure of silent reproach. I fancy that picture to be my real self in youth and innocence — myself being but a miserable counterfeit.

"The pictures of my children too, my lovely babes! My heart yearns for them who once found their heaven at my breast. But, alas, they are strangers to me now; they look down upon me with eyes that know me not. Them also I betrayed, robbing them of their mother's love, and they need me not! I drop my eyes in bitter shame, and hurry away.

"Some seven generations I have seen come and go, the bonds of blood uniting us; but not only have they learned to look upon me as an intruding stranger, but to shun me as a very vision of hell.

"The venerable house has fallen into evil repute as being haunted. The family have often thought of leaving it or pulling it down, but somehow their fortunes seem bound up with that ancient pile, and quitting becomes impossible. They accept the trouble of my presence, and I flit about, a lifeless shade among the living.

"The absence of mystery too enables them to put up with me. I am known to be their ancestress, and my sad history in all its details is a matter of gossip; the very echoes of the house seem to whisper about the young wife who was so lovely but faithless.

"The fatal necklace is an heirloom in the family. But the central pearl is missing. A diamond cross has been added in its stead — the symbol of faith, if I remember aright.

"It is my necklace still. And whenever the owner for the time being is about to pass away, I appear by

her dying bed with the solemn question, "Where is the pearl?"

"For several generations there was nothing but horror by way of an answer, and, dismayed at the terrible confusion I created, I would hurry away in despair. But an expedient has been found. The dying women now invariably place their hand on their Bible, replying boldly, "The pearl is found! We have this as a pledge!" It is not my lost pearl, you understand, but there is no gainsaying their reply. Ah me, had *I* found that pearl of great price which gives such assurance to dying souls, I too might have had healing comfort for my loss. But the sin remains, my pearl is gone, and I am left to wail in torment!"

She was silent, writhing in agony. But even now, though filled with despair, her face preserved an expression of childlike loveliness and most engaging innocence. How bewitchingly beautiful she was! And I thought to myself, were it not that she stands condemned out of her own mouth, and had another told me her story, it would seem impossible to believe it, to credit so fair a creature with such a measure of indwelling wrong.

Behold the growth of passion! It is but a passing thought perchance, moving the heart. Whence is it — who can tell? Whence is the sudden cloud darkening the fair heaven? and whence the electric spark? Your mind conceives; and your heart, unless you guard it, will nurse the awful birth. The fiery influence shoots through your being. Your nerves tremble, your blood is aflame. And though quiet may be restored, there is that within you which at any moment may course through your veins afresh. For remember, if you had an ocean of the red stream of life, one drop

of poison might vitiate it. Alas, it is more than a drop; the tempting thought has grown to a power of evil possessing you — a nature within your nature — wild, lawless, and leading you captive. Sin has taken root in your soul, innocent though it found you. How far it may take you God alone can tell.

Watch over your thoughts, then, lest they ruin your soul! Watch, I say, and stifle sin in its birth. It may be a small thing at first, but how awful is the growth, suffusing body and soul with poison, doubly dangerous for its seeming sweetness! Has it seized your heart — ah, fly to the Physician.

Where is He?

Alas, my friend, I know not.

LETTER XXV.

SNATCHES of song keep running in my head; it is not I who seize upon melody, but the melody takes hold of me. You little think what power of torment there may be bound up in music, and the sweeter its echoes, the more cruelly they fall upon the soul. I do not refer to memories that may be connected with sound; they may be very bitter, but we are used to that and can hardly expect it to be otherwise; it is not this I mean. But there is that in music which is utterly discordant with this place of woe, producing a terrible jar in the soul. Harmony and hell,— the bare thought is enough to distract you. What is music but a longing for the infinite, filling you with a foretaste of joy and beauty unspeakable? But for us the truth of such longing has vanished, since we are for ever severed from that promised world, toward the shores of which the waves of highest melody will ever tend. Now only I understand the full power of music; but the knowledge is clothed with terrible pain, giving you a glimpse of Paradise, and leaving you in hell! . . .

What was the name of that place among the hills of Samaria where we rested one noonday hour in the shadow of palm trees? Was it not Shechem or Sychar? The people there will tell you that a certain broken cistern, which still yields water, is the identical well where Jacob wept for joy on seeing Rachel with her father's sheep. Never have I known greener fields or more luxuriant vegetation than at this blessed spot, stern heights rising about you. The whole valley

seemed a garden, rich in figs and mulberries, in pomegranates, vines and sycamores. The date-palm, the cactus, the aloe, grow in profusion; olive groves at the foot of the hills, pines and evergreen oaks climbing beyond.

But there was no rest for us by Jacob's well. The heat was intense, even in the deepest shade, and the plague of insects was intolerable. We were glad, therefore, to shorten our siesta and seek the cooler upland air. On the road Lily told me a story.

Let me repeat it. Two things, however, may surprise you with regard to this narrative, which treats of faith — a weak wavering faith it is true, but seeking for strength.

You may wonder in the first place that Lily should have told it, whose pure, steadfast, childlike faith never knew the sorrows of tempting doubt. Of course she may have read the story, but how she should give it with such vividness I cannot tell.

You may be surprised, secondly, that *I* should repeat it who am for ever lost to the blessedness of believing. For had I but the poorest remnant left, this very fact, I doubt not, would bring me within the reach of salvation. It is memory only which has a hold of this little story; and though it may stir my feelings, the spirit is dead — dead. Pity me, my friend; but you cannot understand the fearful mockery of speaking of things pertaining to faith — the very life of the soul — and having no part in them! They seem to rise before me, beckoning me to lay hold on them; I stretch forth my hand, and lo, there is a hopeless blank.

It is just like trying to call back a face you have known; you see now the eyes, now the mouth, now this

expression, now that; but the living whole will not return to you.

Yea, and it is a face for which I thirst and hunger — even the face of Him who died on the Cross. I can speak now of this feature, now that — of His wondrous love, His humility, His grace; but I cannot see *Him* — the Man of sorrows — who alone could yearn over a soul in hell.

But enough! Whatever trouble weighed upon the spirit of him of whom Lily's story told, it must have been light and peace, compared with the fearful darkness enveloping me.

This is what I remember:

"When the Apostle Peter took his last leave of the Christian people of Antioch, having set his face toward Rome to follow his Lord in death, a great number of the faithful, young and old, accompanied the beloved Father beyond the city. But they had to separate, weeping as He blessed them; and returning to their homes, they yielded their hearts to the will of God. The apostle went his way.

"But there was one, old in years, who, having shared in the parting benediction, yet followed in the distance. And Peter, perceiving him, beckoned him to approach.

"'Thou art troubled, my son,' said the aged apostle, with winning love; 'what is it that oppresses thy heart?'

"'Father,' replied the stranger timorously, 'is it not faith which justifies man in the sight of God, and makes him an heir of the kingdom?'

"'Yea, surely. Canst thou not believe?'

"'I do believe, beloved Father, but I cannot tell whether it is saving faith. It seems so weak and wavering, and yet by faith alone I may reach to heaven.

That is my grief! I seem to be able to believe, fully and ardently at times, but not for long; and again I am left troubled and doubting. Faith seems to be shattered to pieces then, robbing me of all assurance, and were it not for the blessed name of the Saviour, I had nothing left to cling to. I have known moments when I seemed to rise as on wings of trust, when the fulness of heaven seemed given me. At such times I tasted all the blessedness of believing that he who seeks shall find; that he who knocks shall be received of God; of believing fully that I, led and taught by the Holy Spirit, would never again wander away from my Father in heaven; that I was bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ; and that His love would hold me safe to all eternity. I have known such faith as this, and, believe me, Father Peter, it was free from self-sufficient thoughts. And yet it cannot be saving faith; for at the very moment, sometimes, when my heart seemed nearest to the blessed communion of my Saviour, sin was at hand, and I fell grievously, losing the sense of divine acceptance, and finding myself in the dust, bleeding and helpless, and more miserable than he whom the thieves left on the road to Jericho; but the Good Samaritan was far — far away!

"'Alas, Father, my sufferings at such times are great. The sneers of the unbelieving at the power of faith I could have borne; but that the experience of my own heart should confirm such doubt distresses me greatly.

"'Yet so far I have always risen to my feet again, to renew the conflict; shutting my doors on unbelief, and willing to be led as a little child by Him who came

to save. But woe is me, I am not saved — I think I am standing, and lo, I fall.

"'I am truly grieved at this my state, but repentance never yet gained me that power of the Spirit that might fit me for more real fellowship with Christ. Alas, Father Peter, my sorest weeping avails me not. When thou hadst fallen, thou didst weep I know; but thou couldst rise from tears more firmly planted than before, never again to deny the blessed Lord. But not so I — I fall, I weep; I rise, I fall, denying the Master continually.

"'You see, holy Father, what manner of faith this is! There is but one thing I am sure of, even the name of the Saviour which alone has never left me; aught else is wavering and, I doubt me, no certain foundation. Had I not been troubled already, I must have been filled with fear and trembling on hearing the word lately — Show thy faith by thy works! For alas my works, if not altogether evil, are full of imperfection testifying against my faith. How, then, shall it save me, if this is all my hope of acceptance?

"'I look back on life, and lo, I see a continued struggle — now in sorrow, now in despair. I will not say I have lost hope entirely; nay, I know that in spite of defeat I must go on battling, remembering that salvation is not of man's striving, but of God's giving. But I am old now, fast approaching the time when no man can work. Dare I hope for victory? will it be given to such weakness of faith? I am full of fear, clinging to the one hope only that the Good Samaritan, whose name I have believed in, for all my backslidings, will come to me at the last to lift me in His arms of pity and carry me home.

"'But will He do it? He has bound up my wounds

again and again; will He accept me in the end? I dare not plead my faith,— weak and wavering as it is, I am altogether unworthy of His saving mercy. I have not loved Him as I ought; even less than father or mother, or son or daughter, coming continually between me and Him. Ah, what shall I do to find His peace? what shall I do to be sure of being saved?"

"The apostle had listened in silence. His countenance shone with a heavenly light, his eyes seeking for things afar. What was it that moved in his soul, radiating from his brow — what blessed memory of a day gone by? The Spirit had carried him back to the sea of Tiberias, and he hears the voice of the risen Saviour, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' And now, as then, his heart makes answer, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' And his Lord repeats, 'Feed my sheep.'

"My sheep! He looked upon the aged man. Here was one of the Good Shepherd's wandering sheep. And greatly moved, the apostle said:

"'My brother, if faith, being poor, cannot help thee, try love. Mark my words; let it be thy one desire henceforth to show to the Lord that thou lovest Him. Let nothing be too great, and nothing too little, to do *for His sake.* Let love to Him be thy staff and thy strength, and thou shalt find peace for thy soul. Thy very endeavor to prove thy love to Him will make thee rich in the assurance of His love. It will fill thy soul, it will save thee utterly. Love for thee also will be the law's fulfillment.

"'Behold,' he added, 'how wondrous is *His* love! steeping thee in blessing even while thou are sacrificing all. Whatever thou doest for Him comes back to thee. He never takes; He only gives, fulfilling His own word

that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Yet it is thy love He looks for.'

"'But what of faith, my Father,' asked the stranger doubtingly, 'by which alone we are said to live?'

"A happy smile lit up the apostle's countenance, and he replied:

"'It will be well, my son, with faith even. Thinkest thou it could be absent where love lives and moves? Go thy way, and hold fast that which thou hast; and grace and peace be with thee evermore.'"

Have I not spoken some time ago of a peculiar pain, a separate sorrow? Ah, my friend, I have not told thee all.

We are ever on the verge of despair; a touch, a thought only, and we are in the midst of it; it is incessantly welling up from the depth of our own heart, ready to engulf us. The mind at times resists with a frenzied power, but only to sink back in defeat. And the worst of it is that I am struggling as it were on both sides, offering agonized resistance, while turning tooth and nail against myself in maddest hatred.

How long these fits may last I cannot tell; it is not with us as with you, that exhausted nature herself yields the remedy. There is no nature here, but only existence.

But the paroxysm ceases. There seems to be a climax of fury; when I have beaten myself out, so to speak, there is a lull.

But sometimes — ah! this is the deepest experience, would I could say the most precious! but that is more than hell admits of,— sometimes, as the waves of madness sink away, there rises a vision of my soul, wondrous and holy, even the image of the Crucified One.

And there is a sudden calm, despair seems drowned, and all is still. Not that suffering ceases, but an all-enfolding sense of loss has swallowed up the rest. I stand accused — I hear a voice crying: "It is thou, thou who broughtst Him to the cursed tree!"

Did I say vision? Nay, the very word is too much. I was a prey to longing, but I dare not delude myself; such seeing is not for me. The hungry spirit imagined for a moment — I see the Cross — the thorn-crowned figure — I look — and it is gone! Yet I seem to feel it presently, if only I could pierce the hiding darkness. I gaze and gaze, but tenfold night enwraps the longing soul.

Him who died I see not, but the Cross keeps dawning forth and receding. Beyond it I get not. I once knew the story, but it is gone, gone; and the more I try to remember, the greater seems the blank. Tell me, ought I to despair, ought I to rejoice? I see a Cross truly, though an empty one! Did He not die on the Cross? Why should it keep rising before me? Is it for punishment? is it for hope? Was not there something about taking up the Cross and following?

Happy, thrice happy, O men and women, having a cross to bear! Murmur not, but bear it willingly, lest the time come when ye long for it and find it an empty vision the very burden gone.

LETTER XXVI.

We were sitting together on a high cliff overlooking a northern sea. A few solitary trees stretched forth their branches above us, a landmark for vessels sailing by. Far below us the murmuring waves broke in melodious cadence, leaving their mysterious message with the lonely shore.

Evening was stealing across the sky with those lingering touches known only in the distant north, night hesitating, though the sun be about to set. Sleeping nature there is curtained in a balmy twilight, steeped in the tints of vanished sunbeams, and hiding with tender shadows both land and sea. In the north only summer-time reaches its fullest meaning, each sinking day leading forth the radiant morn; darkness is not, but a dreamful dusk in its stead. Nothing more beautiful than those evening hours with their slowly settling calm; how enchanting the stillness, how full of poetry the hushed expanse, the slumbrous sea at your feet, and the distant shore blushing with the kisses of parting day.

But I was heedless of it all, for she sat by me. Her deft little hands were busy with some needlework. I was to read to her, but the book had dropped from my hold, and I was fast losing myself in dreams. How sweet she was in her springtime of youth, just entering upon her sixteenth year. There was something unutterably attractive in that first unfolding of womanhood, so tenderly appealing, so holy withal.

She was very white, but it was the transparent white-

ness of the lily suffused with a faint reflection of the sunset sky. The red life-stream of youth, fragrant and pure, throbbed beneath her delicate skin; it took but little to call up bewitching blushes to her lovely face. A wealth of hair crowned her; it fell in silky masses about her shoulders, and her long lashes appeared to withhold a depth of beauty from your longing gaze. There was something infinitely childlike about her mouth and the sweet oval of her face; but it blended with an impress of womanhood, a mystery to be worshipped.

A peculiar stillness veiled her being — a calm of life, if so I may call it; the gentle breathing moved her bosom, and her hands flitted lightly about her work. She was busy with her own thoughts, which seemed to glide across her features like sunbeams, leaving a smile behind.

As I sat wrapt in the sight of her, unconscious of aught else, I soon perceived glow chasing glow on her cheek, and mantling her brow.

At last her eye met mine and she asked:

"Why do you keep looking at me so persistently?"

"Why, Lily? Do you dislike it?"

"I am sorry to seem unkind, Philip," she said, "but I do dislike it. If you stare at me like that I feel strangely troubled — like a bird held fast by cruel hands. I do not know why; but you might stop it — could you not, dear?"

"Certainly," I said, smiling at the simple question. "But do you think I could harm you? Are you afraid of me?"

"Afraid of you!" she cried, roused to sprightliness; "that is strange. I might as well ask whether you are afraid of me — are you?" And she put her

little hand in mine. "Are you angry?" she went on gently, after a while.

"When was I angry with you last, Lily; let me see?"

"I don't remember it in the least," she said, brightening more and more. "But come, we had better think of home now."

And she took my arm, looking at me with her trustful eyes, as if to say that fear of me was altogether impossible. I laid hold of the thought, and felt happy again.

We went along the cliff. It was a rich balmy evening in June. On the strand below, the fishing boats offered a busy scene; a few yachts in the distance glided before the breeze. And on the horizon an island coast lay shrouded in a mystery of transfiguring light. It was one of those rare evenings when earth's beauty seems touched with a reflection of heaven's perfect bliss.

"Afraid of you!" Lily repeated, reverting gaily to the thread we had dropped. "That was the strangest idea you ever had! On the contrary, I feel wonderfully secure and taken care of, and the thought of your manliness fills me with pride. I fancy sometimes that strength is given to you for me as well,— that you would never allow any one to hurt me, and I say to myself, Who could resist him? It must be a grand thing to be a man and do noble things in life; but I think it is better still to be a woman and be cared for by a man who is noble and strong. And you know things much better than I do. They say there is much evil in the world; it is sad, but I suppose it is true. Now a man with your knowledge sees things, and sees through them; he must be comparatively safe from evil, and be able to hold others safe. That is why I feel so happy by your side,

as though I could follow blindly wherever you lead me. I care not to be strong and clever myself, since I have all I need in you. You are noble, I am sure, and ready, not only to defend those you love, but even to give up anything for their sake. I like to fancy myself in trouble and danger; it is quite a pleasant sensation, so long as I have you near me. I am sure you would even risk your life for me, would you not? You smile; but don't think me silly. I am quite sure you are good and noble and strong."

Of course I smiled. My soul seemed lit up as with a thousand stars, dispelling everything that need shun the light. What a wondrous power that child had over me, lifting me above myself into her own atmosphere of purity! I may well call it an influence divine. I seemed to rise from the dust and to be what she believed me,— one stronger than she, good and wise, well fitted to be the guardian of her trustful life. O happy moment — never to return!

The evening was fading; we were not far from our dwelling. We had reached a place where we often rested, on the top of a towering cliff rising several hundred feet above the sea. At high-water the waves would beat about the foot of it, foaming and curling, and falling back exhausted. But the tide was low now, and the silvery ripples in the distance hardly touched the ear. On the top of the cliff a flagstaff had been erected, something in the shape of a cross; beneath it there was a low wooden bench. We sat down, Lily and I, as we had often done before. The top of the cliff was still within reach of the parting light; all about us — land, sea, and sky — seemed veiled in calm. We sat silent; a sacred stillness, the peace of nature at rest, enfolded our hearts.

"Look!" cried Lily suddenly, pointing upward.

A flight of sea birds winging their way across the deep — high above us, but it was so still that we heard them plainly. We followed them with our eyes till they vanished in the dusk.

"They are gone," said Lily with a deep-drawn sigh. "Were they not like blessed souls journeying to the better land, where sorrow is not, nor death, nor pain, and tears are wiped away? How they must rejoice. What longing — what triumph!"

Strange to say, a similar idea had come to me. My soul was open to uplifting thoughts.

The silence was broken. And presently we talked about the music of the sea — the monotonous rhythm of which seems ever new. I compared the rising and sinking of the waters to a pendulum, measuring the ages of eternity.

And we spoke of the wondrous longing in the human heart, ever reaching to that which is afar, above, beyond; making it restless even in the lap of content.

Again we were silent, and then Lily said:

"How beautiful that the sign of the Cross should overlook the sea from this high cliff! How the sight of it must flash comfort across the deep, cheering the sailor in time of trouble, perhaps, when he is battling against wind and wave. The white cliff will be seen afar, and the Cross must seem to stretch forth arms of blessing, sending the message far and wide: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed thee — thou art mine!'"

"But Lily, not everybody shares your feeling; this Cross, as you call it, to most sailors will be a mere flagstaff."

"Perhaps so," she said; "but Christian people are alike in deepest feeling nevertheless."

She paused, and then continued, closing her hands on my arm unconsciously:

"For my own part, I have often felt the power of the Cross, young as I am. I love to think of it as a symbol. Sometimes, when I am troubled, I need but call the thought of it to mind, and quiet is restored.

"Can your heart ever be troubled, Lily?"

"Yes, often. It is true I have everything to make me happy, but unrest often fills my soul. I suppose it must be so while we are in this life."

She was right: the heart of man will be battling for deepest rest to the last.

"But I have what is better than the Cross to help me," Lily continued, rising and leaning against it — "His own dear name. Whatever trouble may come to me, I need but whisper that name, and peace straightway flows down upon me. His own peace, so full of healing: surely it is blessed to call on Him in all things! Have you tried it, Philip? Oh, do; it is so easy to turn to Him with all our griefs and failings. It needs but a word, a clinging to His name, and the blessing is given. I know it. I have found it so."

No, I could not say I had tried; at least never since I was wont to pray by Aunt Betty's knee. But . . . what was that moving within, stirring my deepest soul? . . . Yes . . . I would listen, I would follow and try.

The Good Shepherd standing at the door — it was not His fault that salvation was offered in vain. I heard Him knocking even then, and His fear fell upon me. "Is it Thou, Lord?" I cried tremblingly, "alas, I am not ready; I will let Thee in when the place is prepared!" And feebly I set about sweeping and garnishing it, keeping Him waiting till it was too late.

LETTER XXVII.

My letters are becoming few and far between. I dread the effort more and more, though I feel urged to write. I yield, but only to be seized with an indescribable reluctance, and I drop the pen in the midst of a sentence perhaps.

This reminds me of Aunt Betty's letters luckily. That will help me to catch a thread, for I assure you the very sight of ink is sickening to me. But the memory of Aunt Betty is like a refreshing breeze.

Now Aunt Betty's letters were a very image of herself — bubbling over, candid, and sometimes queer, without the faintest pretense at elaboration. She had no time for thought or composition, she said; and she wrote none but so-called confidential letters. But the fact was that her missives sometimes would produce the strangest confusion.

I remember her coming flying into my mother's room one day with a letter in her hand.

"She must be stark staring mad!" she cried excitedly. "What am I to do with Jemima's paupers? Was there ever such a misunderstanding?"

We tried to calm her, and begged for an explanation. I was a half-grown lad at the time. Auntie plunged into the subject.

"There was a poor sick woman with a handful of children whom I assisted in supporting, while the husband served his term for housebreaking. Now, Jemima wrote to me the other day that the convict had returned — that the wife had died, leaving him as helpless

as any of his babes. Would I suggest what could be done?

"I did the nearest thing at hand, despatching some money and begging her to send particulars as to age, sex, and the rest of it; I would try and find homes for them."

"The sex of the husband, auntie?" I interposed roguishly.

"Don't interrupt me with your nonsense, Philip. It is too much of a mess, and I am sure a great trouble to dispose of. Can you imagine that stupid Jemima sending me the whole lot of them bodily? There they are in the housekeeper's room, eight blessed souls, imagining I have homes for them in my pocket. That hulking convict, above all things smelling horribly of tobacco. What am I to do?"

"Perhaps you *meant* to write for particulars, and wrote for the family instead!" I suggested.

"How can you be so stupid, Philip? I am sure my letters are as plain as ink; no child could mistake their meaning. Jemima must have lost her head!"

The convict and his offspring, meanwhile, were solacing themselves in the housekeeper's room, overflowing with thanks, and nothing seemed further from their minds than the idea of ever leaving again. Aunt Betty meantime running to and fro asking distractedly — "What should she do with them?"

However, she found my father coming to the rescue, and the misunderstanding proved prolific of blessing, inasmuch as the former housebreaker was before long started in a course of honesty, and his flock of children cared for.

You have followed me so far, and I have told you that evil desires, vainly seeking to be gratified, are an

ever-burning fire here; but to what extent this is true you can scarcely conceive, not knowing how they are inflamed. It is imagination of course to which that horrible office pertains. Even on earth imagination may gain a dangerous ascendency; but in hell it wields a terrible sway. It becomes a monster of tyranny here, the soul being its helpless prey.

Nothing more easy after all than to clothe gloating fancy with a certain amount of reality; bring the conscious will to bear, and you have your desire — after a fashion — the table to glut at, the wine, and the dice. Hell is full of such things. But all is worse than illusion. Oh, let me be silent! It is adding mockery to torture. You understand me, I think. The crime of Ixion and the fiery wheel of his agony form together a true symbol of the condition of multitudes of the lost.

Can you doubt that I am referring to my own experience? Have I not told you that I was a man of sensual bent, and a slave to passion? Do you imagine that either is mortified here? Ah, let me refrain!

I am no better than others here, except, perhaps, that at times I am overwhelmed with shame. How is it possible for one who loved Lily — who was loved by her — to sink so low!

Yet there is one difference marking me out from at least some others. Whenever the pure exalted image of Lily rises on my soul, all evil passions are assuaged; the wild conflagration ceases, and once again I seem a human soul. . . .

"I am so tired, Philip," she said, softly. And forthwith I stopped the mule that carried her. As a tender mother her ailing child, I lifted her from the saddle,

depositing her gently on the mossy ground. We were near a bridge leading over Brook Cedron.

"So tired." Oh, the sad sad story contained in these words! But seventeen, and always tired! I had closed my heart to the painful testimony; I would not believe that so young a life might be taken. Yet I could not drive anxiety away entirely; again and again I was forced to face the dread reality. "Life will probably ebb away in hemorrhage," an English physician at Jaffa had said. "Be very careful; any exertion or emotional excitement may bring it on."

And I was careful, keeping her as the apple of my eye. That journey through the Holy Land, undertaken at her own urgent entreaty, was but one continuous attempt to make her happy. She was the center of a circle of love into which nothing harmful was allowed to enter. That I served her was natural. But Turks and Bedouins even looked upon her with worshipping awe. Ah! deathless time, love and pain abounding!

Wherever we went, she found holy memories of Him to whom her heart had been given; He speaking to her through the Bible she loved. Nay, it was He that accompanied her from place to place. Her happiness was supreme. "I seem to be in heaven already," she would say to me. To her the sun was rising and setting as in a dream, transfiguring all earthly things. The fleeting hours to her were as moments anticipating eternity.

It came, the dreaded spectre, like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky — not carrying her off, but leaving me hopeless with fear.

She recovered a little, but what prospect was there of returning health? Her mind was easy, but anxiety with me was great. As a drooping lily she was, fair

still and fragrant, holding her cup prayerfully while she was able, but fast closing her petals in the faintness of death. "Lily is tired,"— the Heavenly Gardener was transplanting her to His Paradise above.

We were halting by the royal brook — Lily remembering David and a greater King that passed there. The scenery is present with me even now — every stone, every shrub of that hallowed spot.

Moriah was in view, where Solomon's temple once stood, and that other temple built by Herod, where Omar's mosque now lifts her minarets proudly. To our right lay the valley of Jehoshaphat, deep and narrow, a cleft between towering mountains, the rocks on the one side being fretted with innumerable caves, the sepulchres of old, of kings and prophets. On the Mount of Corruption to our left a poverty-stricken Jewish village clings to the steep incline. At our feet was the stony bed of Cedron, panting for its dried-up waters; the Mount of Olives was rising beyond, a succession of gentle curves, leading onward to Gethsemane. A group of ancient olive trees marks that sacred spot. The setting sun was casting deep shadows, broken by streaks of dazzling light, across the valley, the top of Olivet only glowing with a subdued radiance that was grateful to the eye.

The place where we rested was in the shade entirely. A gentle breeze, but cool and refreshing, was playing about us. Lily sat still with folded hands, looking listless; she was tired — tired to death perhaps. Her eyes closed. Oh how white she looked! and pure as a dying Madonna. But more alarming than her pallor were those sudden flushes overspreading her features, leaving her more white than before.

The mule and his attendant had composed themselves

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF

to sleep at a little distance. "Happy boy!" I said, looking at him, adding involuntarily, "Happy animal!" The Turkish escort engaged for our safety lay smoking the inevitable hookah, in blissful ignorance apparently of landscape beauty or human grief.

Silence was becoming oppressive. My Lily was not asleep, though her eyes were closed, and I turned to her gently with a question: "What are you thinking of?"

"My sins," she said, looking at me.

"Your sins!" I echoed, refraining from what I was going to add, lest I should pain her. . . . "O Lily, my pious child, they can neither be grievous nor many."

"Yes, Philip!" she said eagerly; "there is no one good save He. We have all come short of the glory, but God only knows how much we have sinned."

"But what makes you think of sin just now?" She looked up surprised. The gift was hers at any time to open my eyes. I knew what she meant. My gaze went abroad over the peaceful expanse. Truly what spot could be more fitted to convince man of his own worthlessness? I bowed my head in shame.

"Dear friend," she continued, tremulous with emotion, "at this very moment I feel reproved; even here wrong thoughts will assail the heart. A sudden longing had come to me that I might be spared a little longer, but I forgot to add, 'Thy will be done!' You see that was wrong, for we ought to yield ourselves to Him entirely, believing that our Father knows best, else we cannot be His children."

An indescribably bitter feeling of anger and self-will rose in my heart; what knew I of giving up the will for the gain of sonship? My eye involuntarily sought the

Mussulman, and the evil spirit said: "Better be a Turk outright!" But chastening sorrow was at hand, and I said gently:

"Surely you may live; do not sadden your heart with such thoughts. O Lily, my good little sister, my own, think of the love that would keep you here!"

"I do," she said, with a smile like sunbeams breaking through clouds, "love here is precious, but a better love awaits me beyond."

Another pause, but I would not — I could not be silent, and I continued:

"The desire to live cannot be wrong, sweetest Lily. Let it be very present with you, and you will see it fulfilled. God Himself has planted the love of life in our hearts; it cannot be sinful, then, to cling to it. Do not wrong yourself; there never was a less self-willed being than you, so unselfish and good."

"So the brother's love would think," she said, looking at me tenderly; "but you are right in this; my feelings were not selfish though self-willed. It is not for my own sake I would wish to live — I was thinking of others. Philip, darling, can you understand that I would like to live for your sake? I know you will miss me more than any — you, my one, my truest friend!"

Had I been alone with her I would have sunk at her feet in a transport of worship; as it was I could but stammer: "Lily, I shall die if you leave me!"

Again we spoke not. But silence now was sweetened. I had seen heaven opened.

Her face was veiled in solemn seriousness. I knew she was battling it out in her soul. But even the trouble of conflict could not cloud her trust in God. She saw the palm of victory, reaching forth her hand

to seize it, for I heard her murmur: "Thy will, Lord, not mine!"

Yet the crown was not fully hers at that moment, it seemed; she rose suddenly, saying with quivering lips: "It must be sin which prevents the full gift of peace. Surely it is wrong to cling to life! . . . But I am ready to go . . . and I feel stronger now. Let us move on."

I took hold of her hand with a gentle pressure, saying:— I know not how I could frame such words!— "Lily, my own, it is not the world you feel bound to — and surely such love as yours is far from sin! How can you feel guilty and troubled?"

She looked at me, with a heavenly light gleaming in her eyes. I felt it at the time, but understood not such beauty, not knowing the victory it promised.

"I do feel sinful, but not troubled," she said, "for I can trust Him, and He knows it. . . . Look, Philip," she continued, turning to the dried-up brook, "can you count these pebbles, great and small? Innumerable as they, are the sins of the world. But the foot of Him has passed here when He sorrowed even unto death. The sins of all were laid upon Him — mine too. He has taken them away; they cannot trouble me!"

We went on beyond Cedron, ascending Olivet, and reaching Gethsemane. The garden is enclosed with a low stone wall, and contains eight olive trees of great antiquity. The spot where Judas betrayed his Lord with a kiss is fenced in separately, and even the Turks deem it accursed. We stopped beneath those trees, the same, no doubt, which saw the Saviour wrestle in awful agony when He drank the cup that men might go free.

Lily was kneeling in earnest devotion, praying for submission, and, I doubt not, praying for me. Peace was given her there and then, shining like a halo from her brow as she rose —" Thy will be done! "

But *my* soul was barren of prayer. I felt ready to curse my weakness which had agreed to this pilgrimage through the Holy Land. I longed for our far-off home; life there, I imagined, might have smiled upon us, whereas death stared me in the face at every turn on the sacred soil.

We took the shorter way back, passing St. Stephen's Gate, and following the Via Dolorosa through the town. That road is full of holiest reminiscences; the prætorium where the crown of thorns was platted and the Holy One mocked by sinful men — the " Ecce Homo " arch, where Pilate pointed to the Saviour saying, " Behold the man! "— the spot where Mary, meeting her divine Son as He carried the Cross, fainted for grief — and that other spot where the Lord, turning to the wailing women that followed Him, said: " Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children! "— and lastly, the place where the saintly Veronica wiped His holy forehead with her veil. Here we turned aside; but the road leads on to Calvary.

This then was the Via Dolorosa! A road of sorrows for me as well. But not of Him I thought who once went this way as the Lamb to be slain. I grieved for myself only, and not a thought of comfort I found on that road. How, then, should I be comforted here?

It seems strange that I never thought of visiting the so-called city of the Jews, which is one of the greatest sights in hell. It is not spoken of as Jerusalem here;

but I doubt not it is the actual city which bore that name on earth. At any rate, I can never think of it without straightway calling to mind the city I knew.

A burning desire laid hold of me suddenly to go to Jerusalem. What though it was a town of sorrows to me, I had Lily there. It seems in my power once again to see the places I visited with her; to traverse the narrow valley of Jehoshaphat; to rest by the bridge leading over Cedron; to follow the road of sorrows from Gabbatha to Golgotha; and, if so minded, to lay me down by the way at the rich man's gate — another Lazarus.

And yet if that city be Jerusalem in truth, it must be a city ruined and undone. There must be a great difference between Jerusalem of old and Jerusalem after its fall. But what is that to me? Whatever the city may have come to here, it cannot be so utterly changed that I shall not recognize the places I once saw with Lily by my side.

I cannot rest; and though light be fast decreasing, I am urged to go. What though it be but vain imaginings which drive me thither, there is a miserable satisfaction in obeying the behest.

But let me make inquiries first concerning that strangest of cities. Far away though it be, surely there are people here who can tell me something about it!

LETTER XXVIII.

FAR away, and separated from the continent of hell by an immeasurable waste, lies the great city of the Jews — a world apart. And there, in perpetual cycles, the dread history repeats itself, from the catastrophe of Golgotha to the final destruction. Upon the sacking of Jerusalem the whole is engulfed in darkness; but daylight reappearing, the wheel of history has run back, once more to begin the awful period.

Any one entering the city as the night is dispelled finds the Jewish people overwhelmed with horror at the recent deed. The awful words keep sounding about them: "His blood be on us and on our children!" They seem aware that a terrible thing has been done — that a terrible retribution is at hand. Jerusalem trembles. Those who have taken part in bringing about that most fearful of crimes ever perpetrated by man, but whose consciences are not seared entirely, raise the question whether, after all, He was the Son of God whom they crucified; they smite upon their breast and rend their garments.

Even the chief priests and elders, hardened though they be, are disturbed. But they flatter themselves with the consolation that the sepulchre is made sure. As the great Sabbath breaks, behold them going forth to the garden with Caiaphas at their head. Pale are their faces and bloodshot their eyes; they grind their teeth, but Satan upholds them! The three crosses from Golgotha look down upon them; but not one of those men dares lift an eye to the place where they hanged Him

on the tree. Where is their priestly dignity? See how they snatch up their long clothing and hasten apace to the tomb!

Having reached it they seem satisfied: it is all as it should be. The watch is there, the seal untouched, and the stone in its place.

The great Sabbath has come. But never was there less of Sabbath joy in Jerusalem. A cloud is upon the people; they all wish the festal time were past. Their thoughts roam away from symbolic action. The unleavened bread has lost its sweetness; the blood of the paschal lamb is clotted in their hands as the endeavor to put it upon the lintel of their houses. The angel of death does *not* pass by; he is among them; they know it in their hearts.

But see, they shake off the stupor. As a stroke of lightning the news has fallen upon them that the Crucified One has risen. The words of life sound as a death-knell in their ears. But is it true? Corroborative evidence is loud on all sides; there is no gainsaying the wondrous event. They hasten towards the sepulchre. It is empty, and the stone rolled from the door.

Pilate is one of the very first to whom the news is taken. His evil conscience has told him to expect the worst; and lo, the worst has happened! There *is* a God to raise the righteous, even from the grave, and to destroy the workers of iniquity. Pilate trembles at every sound; each moment, he thinks, must bring the avenger to his door. He looks for his wife, the abject coward, and hears her cry: "My dream — O my dream! Alas, that thou deliveredst this Just One into their hands!"

But the high priests and elders are not so easily

daunted. They quickly spread the tale that the body of the Nazarene had been stolen away by His disciples, who invented, they said, the story of His resurrection. They bribed the watchmen to accuse themselves before Pilate of having slept at their post; and the cowardly governor is glad to accept the lie, thrusting the unhappy men into prison to ease his mind.

But the marvelous account is not so easily suppressed. Again and again it is said, the Son of Man is risen indeed, and has been seen by many! And the chief priests know not how to help themselves; the high council forbids the very mention of Him who was crucified.

By degrees the terror lessens; life in the city runs its wonted course. Like startled sheep the people follow their accustomed leaders, and these fail not to apply the balm of self-righteousness to every wound. Hypocrisy flourishes yielding the fruits of death. The whited sepulchres spread the corruption hidden within, and soon the whole body of the people has sickened with uncleanness. It is fast becoming a dead carcass, and the eagles, the worms, will have it for their prey.

Pilate has disappeared. There have been other governors after him, more capable of ruling than he. And the people find it out to their hurt. They are a butt to cruelty and derision, till they can no longer bear it. The flames of insurrection shoot aloft, the heated passions breaking loose; but Jerusalem's worst enemy is within her own walls — the fury of discord. Wildly the people rave against each other; no crime so hideous but it is committed against very brothers. Jerusalem's last hour is at hand. The enemy storms her walls, breathing vengeance and destruction; the end has come of trouble as of hatred — an awful end. The horrors of that siege have never been equalled.

A night of death envelops the scene; the history is played out, to begin again with each recurring dawn.

The day was far advanced when I entered the city. The final catastrophe was at hand. The enmity within had reached its height; hopeless discord was rampant. Hypocrisy and hatred against the common enemy without were the only bonds uniting the seething mass. Deceit, treachery, unchaste living, perjury, murder, and all manner of sorcery, showed their unblushing front. And yet to outward appearance it continued the proud city of David. Gloriously as ever the holy hill of Zion lifted her battlements, and on Moriah rose the temple in splendor unsurpassed. Piety in long garments stood about the streets, making prayers for a pretense; crowds of people passed to and fro from the synagogues. Devoutness in fact made itself conspicious everywhere. Among the pious inscriptions adorning the dwellings by way of proving the peculiar sanctity of their inhabitants, I was struck with one especially, which occurred far oftener than any other, so that I needs must take it as significant — *Godliness is gain!* It seemed, indeed, as if the people were running after both these jointly, looking upon godliness as a means, upon gain as the coveted result, and deeming no cunning too great to obtain it.

My heart quaked as I stole through the crowded streets. This, then, was Jerusalem! Oh how different from the city I had known, and yet how like! It was the same old Jerusalem of the time when the Saviour went about in it teaching and healing. The *Saviour* — ay, at every step the thought of Him rose to my mind, to the forgetting even of Lily. Here surely there must be men who can tell of Him. But first of all I would follow that road from Gabbatha to Gol-

gotha — alas, with other feelings than might have been possible on earth! I needed a guide, and stopped the first Jew I met on the way. But he broke from me gruffly with a sneer, so did another, and yet another. And presently I was buffeted on even mentioning the Via Dolorosa. I suppose they took it for Latin and believed me to be a Roman. At first I saw in their rudeness merely their probable dislike to me as a stranger; before long, however, I could not but accept the fact that in all that city no one could be found who had any knowledge concerning the Son of Mary. He was forgotten — forgotten entirely. False prophets had risen in His stead, to whom they had listened.

There was nothing left for me but to try and find the way unaided.

I turned away in the direction of Brook Cedron, finding the very place by the bridge where once I rested with Lily. On that spot I would rest me now — alas, rest I could not; I only stopped!

There I sat, silent and alone, but content was far away. Memories of Lily were neither more vivid nor more real; longing only was increased tenfold. I had been anxious to revisit the holy scenes, and found them fraught with disappointment. But since existence to me was one great disillusion, what mattered it! Jerusalem was but a grave, forsaken of the Spirit, estranged from God, a prey to hatred, a dead body given over to the undying worm. The souls peopling it were the ghosts of an awful past, living in the destruction they had called down. What could I have found there to yield me even a shadow of content? I had come thither to find myself in a like damnation. Fool that I was to expect it otherwise! But we never learn by experience; we did not on earth — we cannot in hell!

Faint at heart, I grovelled my way back to the city, and came upon scenes of excitement. A new governor had arrived, the last but one appointed by Rome, and was making a splendid entry.

I was anxious to see something of one of the most remarkable cities in hell, the city of Politicians, called also the town of Injustice. Thither I moved.

On the road I met the strangest procession — a most extraordinary machine being wheeled along by a rabble conspicious for scarlet caps, and howling frightfully. On the top of the structure I beheld, sitting as on a throne a man wearing the most elegant apparel of Paris fashion and last century style. The hair slightly powdered and carefully arranged, the necktie scrupulously white and embroidered, the velvet coat both costly and genteel, the cuffs of lace setting off hands delicately shaped like a woman's, the silken hose, the shoes trim with bow and buckle,— would one not take such outward signs as the index of a disposition fastidiously refined? But no, he is satiated with blood, worse than Nero himself, his triumphal car on the present occasion being an ambulant guillotine.

Have you recognized him?

Still thirsting for blood, this graceful image of gentility; but hell yields nothing for the quenching of thirst, not even blood. He is always looking at people's necks, as shown by his very compliments, such as they are. "Sir," he says, "your neck is very fine. Madam, allow me to congratulate you upon a lovely throat!" Followed by his creatures, a very hangman's company, he likes to ride abroad among the people, upon whom he looks as a kind of raw material for his philanthropic experiments. But the common folk make

faces at him, calling him a fool possessed of a harmless mania. No one is afraid of him now, for power over necks is not given him here; the unsatisfied craving is his punishment also. Still he has a circle of friends and followers who share his notions with regard to the general rottenness of society and the need of sanguinary revolution. They are sorry for his disappointment, and whenever he has fixed upon a place for his beloved guillotine, they very kindly offer him their necks for decapitation; the procedure, mind you, being without hurt or harm to themselves,— the sort of thing which used to be done in Astley's theater. But their good-natured make-believe cannot satisfy him, simply because there is no shedding of blood.

It was a long journey I had undertaken, and I passed by a town looking a very necropolis. Dark and mute it rose upon a dismal flat. No window, no door, showed life within; not a sound was heard, and though gates stood open not a soul came forth. Once, twice I walked around,— not a living creature in sight. I kept wondering, till a stray ghost explained to me the strange appearance. It was the town of the Inquisition, he said; adding that not long since a powerful king of Spain, with unheard-of splendor and a great retinue, had made his entry into that town.

"Shall I, or shall I not?"

I came to the conclusion that where his Catholic Majesty had gone I might venture.

But at the gate I came upon a placard sufficiently startling. Thus it ran:—

"AUTODAFÉ OF PECULIAR INTEREST!

"Whereas his most Catholic Majesty, the powerful protector of the Holy Inquisition, has graciously prom-

ised to be burnt alive, after most royal and exquisite torture; and whereas six hundred heretics will wait on his Majesty at the stake: the sublime spectacle of their witnessing his passing to the nether fire is herewith announced, the setting in scene being strictly in keeping with hell."

A strange announcement to be sure! But no doubt he had come to his own place, that much-lamented king of Spain, and the town was even now preparing to greet him right royally.

Should I indeed go in? I hesitated. Still I doubted not that even the worst in that city might be borne; and, on the other hand, that placard exercised a kind of demoniac influence over my imagination. I must see that sight!

This, then, was the second "holy" city I had the honor of visiting, and in truth there is a peculiar likeness between them. What the City of Destruction is to the Jewish people, the town of Inquisition may be said to be to Christendom.

A shudder went through me as I entered. Automatically the gates swung on their hinges, closing with an ominous shriek. Those gates, strange to say, stand open like a yawning grave to him who approaches, falling to behind him who has gone in. There I was in the town of crooked streets and death-breathing atmosphere. The high houses have the fewest of windows, and those are provided with iron bars, prison-like. Horror seemed to dwell within. Mysterious figures went gliding through the gloomy thoroughfares, wrapped in long cowls, and hoods over their heads, with two round staring holes for the eyes. Are they dead men risen from their graves? And here and there

a procession meets me, either of dismal penitence, offering the most horrible examples of fanatical self-torture, or of thanksgiving, more dismal still, accompanying condemned sufferers to the scene of their public agony. Pomp and vanity here also, forsooth! But the only thing which brings life into the stagnation of that city is an *autodafé*.

The inhabitants one and all are people who at one time or another were servants of the Inquisition. Others may enter if they are so minded, I myself being one of the few foolhardy who did so.

This city of the Inquisition is as a grave enclosing a terrible secret. For no one knows who, in accordance with the verdict of an unknown tribunal, shall be the next to be dragged to most horrible torture. No one is safe, not even those who hold high position in the mysterious community — possibly the most zealous votaries of a fanatical church. The very members of the secret tribunal are not safe!— for he who lately sentenced his neighbor to cruel and exquisite torture may be the very one to suffer next. Their fate lays hold of them secretly and swiftly — fate? nay, but a just retribution. They are dragged from their hiding-places and brought to the bar. They shall give an account of their faith. They are utterly unable; no one can do so in hell. They are judged accordingly; but, be it noticed, their very judges are equally unable to confess *their* faith.

And now for torture! Whatever of horror, of cruelty, has been invented on behalf of the Inquisition, is all known here and applied to the fullest extent. The victims are disembodied spirits: true, but their imagination is keenly alive to the torment. On earth they raved against hapless humanity; now they rave

against one another, each being judge and victim in turn. They wind up with the stake. But although the fire has no flame, and although the miserable wretches are unable to burn, they none the less suffer in the spirit the excruciating agony of dying on a slowly consuming pyre.

The end of all is horror unspeakable. Souls do not live here; they tremble and quake. Even I shared in the common sensation, although I tried to console myself that in such respect, at any rate, I was guiltless, having never joined, directly or indirectly, in religious persecution. But no matter — since I was there, I seemed in a like damnation.

How frightful was the silence — the lull before an awful storm! For the city was preparing for the climax of her existence. It was plainly evident that the *autodafé* was about to take place. Muffled figures kept gliding from the houses, moving away in a self-same direction. I need but follow them to reach the scene. But as my soul called up the picture of what was to be acted by the most Catholic king amid six hundred heretics, a horror fell upon me. I could not — I dared not — witness the spectacle. I turned and fled as if death in the shape of the holy Hermandad itself were at my heels. Happily I escaped from the town, the cold drops on my forehead, my knees shaking with anguish. I fell in a swoon as soon as the terrible gate closed behind me.

LETTER XXIX.

GIGANTIC structures in earth's parlance may mean the Pyramids, or the great works of Babylon and Nineveh, or some Chinese wall of later date. I have not seen any of these wonders, or their ruins either, but I venture to assert that their importance dwindles into nothing by the side of the growing edifice called the city of Politicians here. And that fabric is raised in a single day, meaning the space between one hell night and another. I call it a day; it may be months, years — I know not. "City," let me tell you, is an inappropriate term, since, although a dwelling-place of many, it is but a single mass, ever added to, but never finished. Between one darkness and another, it reaches colossal dimensions, to break down at last in a heap of shapeless ruin. Night puts a stop to the work, which is begun afresh with every succeeding dawn; yet not quite afresh, the foundations being the same once for all. Indeed it is they which cause the ever-recurring downfall; for, extensive as they are, covering an area of unlimited vastness, they are hopelessly rotten. Who laid them is a mystery; if one may guess, it must have been Satan himself. But however that may be, those foundations have survived through ages of superstructure and ruin. There are passages through them in all directions, and holes where the workers dwell — something like the catacombs.

The "city" then rises on this base. All the statesmen in hell have duty here as master-builders, and of workmen there is no lack; millions there are,— hell

continually disgorging them on this spot, and like bees they bring their building materials with them, working together in virtue of a common instinct like those insects.

You have heard it said of this man or of that, that his conscience is turned to a stone. Now this is no mere figure of speech; such sayings embody an awful truth. It is a terrible thing, my friend, to have a stone where the conscience ought to be! Every deceitful act, every deed of injustice or want of mercy, helps to petrify your conscience. And some people's hearts are so deadened that every righteous feeling has been displaced by a stone of that kind. No one is free from these dead weights,— no one who comes hither at least,— and some drag such loads about with them, that the marvel is they continue alive. Now this city is built of such stones. Some souls there are whose one occupation it is to free their hearts of the petrifying load. Free? but it is hopeless trying; and though stones upon stones be added to the rising structure, the stony heart cannot here be changed. One finds this out by experience only; but some there are, so loaded with injustice, and so anxious to get rid of it, that no experience will convince them.

The head and corner-stones are furnished by the master-builders, the former experts in statesmanship. It is simply astounding to behold the overwhelming weights produced by men of their antecedents. Indeed, one requires the insight obtained here in order to form an idea as to the extent of treachery, injustice, and subtle craft they were capable of in the days of their earthly life. Among them are to be found the greatest wrongdoers the world ever produced. No one has a more unlimited scope for evil than statesmen,

not excepting kings; and their responsibility is awful. For a man might be born heir to some crown and could not help it; but no man can be a statesman without of his own free will undertaking a ruler's duties. They knew what they engaged in and have no excuse. The welfare of millions was in their hand — the power of blessing or cursing; and how did they use it? Look at history — nay, examine the present time. They seem to believe, these men, that in the interest of politics, as they call it, any amount of evildoing will pass. Justice?— it is an empty sound. The welfare of nations? — the power of the state is more than that. They believe themselves exempt from all laws, moral or divine,— imagining God, if He judges them at all, will judge them according to some special standard of right and wrong. Treacherous dealing, tyranny, and armed force were their chief ideas of governing, no matter how many unknown subjects might suffer cruel hardship. And behold, the world's perversity judges them by the glittering tinsel of success, calling him greatest who out-manœuvres all others in perfidity — diplomacy is the current expression; but things are called by their true name here. It is quite apparent in hell that some of the greatest crimes earth ever witnessed were committed in behalf of the so-called higher arts of diplomacy, and that some of the greatest delinquents are to be found among the starred and gartered office-bearers who are the right hand of kings.

But the chief duty of these master-builders consists in seeing the profusion of material, their own and that of others, properly disposed. This offers real difficulty; for each of these ex-statesmen very naturally has his own plan to go by. No two of them ever agree, even though they should find themselves sta-

tioned side by side. But sometimes they are separated, say a hundred miles from one another. Imagine, then, the circumference of the city, and try to imagine these statesmen — one here, one there — building away, heedless of each other. This is the reason why the state is never accomplished. I say "state," for the latent idea *is* to form a state, and when it is finished to choose a king. There are numbers of landless sovereigns loafing about the outskirts of the city, dreadfully anxious to be chosen. I have spoken of those miserable crown-bearers in a former letter.

Our statesmen are sufficiently aware of the difficulty of their undertaking; they are for ever sending despatches in all directions, now cajoling, now threatening, as they hope to gain their end. And their ambassadors creep about from one court — I mean building-station — to another; but no amount of diplomatic perfidity avails, and nothing remains but to call a congress at last. But since there is no neutral ground in all the city itself, they fix upon a certain mud island in the black river which laves the base of this building ground. In order to gain that island they have no choice but to try the experiment of swimming. Now one would imagine our noble diplomatists to be very loth to let the filthy water touch their august persons. But far from it. They like it! (You remember that the black river is fed by all the refuse of injustice and falsehood oozing down from the world.) It is quite a sight, I assure you, to see them sprawling in the horrible water. They have reached their own element, it is plain; and like a set of schoolboys in a mill pond, they flounder about quite lustily.

No sooner are they landed, however, than behold our dignified statesmen! The congress is inaugurated

with due solemnity, each plenipotentiary falling into his place with singular adroitness, and agreeing with peculiar suavity that a common plan of action must be arrived at. But there unanimity stops. Innumerable proposals are made and rejected, mutual jealousy rendering concord impossible. One motion presently meets with acceptance: let each representative try and work out his part towards the general aim. Great hopes are aired, and the result is truly ridiculous. The completed scheme proves the most deplorable farrago; but no one is prepared to give up his individual position, and the end is confusion. Vainly the most impressive speeches are delivered about the incomparable benefits of simple honesty in politics; about the infernal balance of power, without which the greatest revolutions and most hopeless complications are to be dreaded; about the eternal laws of the nature of things; about the duties of politics in a beneficent sense, and the moral power of the ruling creed in modern times, which brands with infamy mere brutal force; about the high state of culture arrived at in this nineteenth century, which alone ought to govern all social questions; about principles of action which should not be set aside even in hell; about sacred rights which must be upheld at any sacrifice. In short, no parliament on earth could develop greater bombast than a meeting of ex-politicians here. But result there is none, and nothing remains but to raise the congress.

Before separating, however, there is the usual exchange of compliments—a profusion of gratitude for mutual helpfulness and invaluable assistance in unraveling difficult points. The congress, in fact, is pronounced a success; the trumpets are sounded, and newspapers sing pæans to the deep penetration, the rare

discernment, and ingenious sagacity of the great leaders in whom was vested the confidence of nations.

The plenipotentiaries, duly elated, retire with amiable expressions of friendly feeling on behalf of their respective cabinets, which, however, does not prevent them, in swimming back, from casting up the muddy waters against each other. So much for the congress.

And the building continues. Time passes. It is long since the radiance of Paradise has last been seen; light is ebbing away. But they build and build out of their own stony hearts and consciences. The structure arises, an informal mass; the higher it reaches, the plainer becomes the fact that it cannot stand. They have just about attained the crowning cupola, which is achieved by dint of innumerable strokes of policy — when, behold, the towering structure collapses with a thundering crash, heard in the farthermost regions of hell! Each stone is flying back to its owner, and cries of despair die away in a common wail. Nothing remains but the gigantic foundation; the builders have fled in horror, leaving the abject kings cowering in misery, like Marius of old on the ruins of Carthage. It is night, and hell is overwhelmed with the stillness of death, the terrors of darkness ever and anon being broken by the wailings of desolate kings.

LETTER XXX:

LIGHT has all but vanished. My thoughts keep wandering back to Lily — my one chance of attaining at least a semblance of peace.

How sweetly she bore up against illness while she was able; what patience, what fortitude was hers, to quiet our apprehensions!

But she grew restless at last. We thought of returning to Europe as speedily as possible; she, however, entreated to be taken back to Bethlehem, and we could not refuse her. With all possible care we had set about the journey, yet were fearful of consequences on reaching our destination, though Lily assured us she felt better and only needed rest.

Hours she passed reclining on a little terrace by the convent wall, where I had spread a canvas to protect her from the sun, I sitting near her; indeed I hardly left her now, and may well say that I was sorrowful unto death. It was there that, for the last time, she told me a story, making an effort as though to prove her fitness. Her last story! It was not the effort that overcame her — her happy smile, the sweet cadence of her voice said so — but death itself. . . .

"The morning broke; the mists of night that veiled the clefts between Olivet and Jerusalem yielded to the return of life. The Apostle James was coming down the mount,— he who was called the Just, the brother of the Lord. He had spent the night communing with God on the mountain, even as the Master had been

wont. And he loved the spot where his Lord had wrestled in agony.

"The apostle was going home, but, quitting the olive grove, he tarried a little on the hillside overlooking the valley. The sun was about to rise, a fresh wind scattering the curling mists. Close by lay the garden of Gethsemane; Brook Cedron murmured below. The royal city opposite lifted her brow — the proud temple sparkling in glory — the temple of which one stone soon would not be left upon another.

"But James hoped to be spared the awful sight, for he loved his town and people. A solemn foreboding told him that he would have run his race before and won the crown — a happy foreboding, for more than town and people he loved his Lord, and to be with Him for ever would be the fulness of joy.

"He was about to proceed when a woman came up to him, young and fair, but plunged in grief. She was but seventeen. Hot tears ran down her cheek, and she wrung her hands. Falling at the apostle's feet, she implored him to pity her. Her husband, she said, had been struck down by a wasting fever, and was fast dying. Physicians could not help him, and they were very poor. He must die, alas, and they loved one another so truly!

"The apostle looked at her in silence, as though reading her inmost soul. He knew her, for she had been present repeatedly when he had proclaimed the good tidings of grace. But faith had not yet taken root in her heart; she clung to the world, and the love of self was strong. It seemed hard to give up the world in the flower of youth, and harder still to yield self. The old man continued gazing at the young woman silently. She felt the power of his look, and

was troubled. For with all tenderness there was in his eye a solemn seriousness, a holy influence over souls which is born of God. At last he spoke:

"'Woman, do you love him truly?'

"'Yea, Father, with all my heart,' replied she tremblingly.

"'As much as yourself?' continued the apostle.

"'Oh far more!' cried she, sobs breaking her voice.

"'It is well, my daughter; there is a means by which you may save your husband's life. You may think it hard, but remember it is the only means! Go about from house to house, begging charity for him!'

"'Alas, Father, how should alms save him from dying?'

"'It is not alms of money you shall ask for, but alms of time. All the days, or parts of days, which good people for the sake of charity will yield out of their own lives, shall be given to your husband.'

"The sorrowful wife thought within herself that at all events *some* people were inclined to charity, and that most valued money far more than time; that, while cleaving to mammon, they wasted many a precious day quite recklessly. She thanked the apostle, and, gathering courage, went her way.

"And presently she was seen going about Jerusalem, telling her story from door to door with humble entreaty, speaking of her sick husband whom she loved, and of the servant of God who had directed her to the pity of charitable men. 'Oh have mercy on me,' she cried; 'let me not ask in vain; give me a day, oh each of you, and God will bless you forever!'

"But it was quite hopeless. Some laughed at her, requesting to know if she were in her right mind; others pushed her away rudely for even suggesting such a

thing; others again thought it a good joke, but preferred not to join in it. Some few, however, seemed ready to admit the possible efficacy of the remedy, but were none the less unwilling to assist in procuring the means. Their own lives were precarious, they said; they had much ado in order to provide for their families, and should not feel justified in sparing any of their precious time. But, strange to say, the very people who were known to waste time most carelessly seemed the least willing to part with even an hour. The poor young wife grew faint at heart, and the cruel taunts she met with from some. . . ."

So far Lily, and no further. One of those paroxysms broke the thread of her story, and before long that of her life. She did not recover — the power of life was gone; or rather, it was as a lamp making a few last flickering efforts, suddenly going out in darkness. . . .

Years passed. Fifteen winters had gone over my head; I was no longer young. I remembered at times Lily's broken story, and in some hour of tender emotion I was one day even prevailed on to tell it to a friend, who thought it so admirable that he fain would have known the whole.

Fifteen years! and how little had I tried to spend them in a manner worthy of the lovely memory of her who was gone. But, strange to tell, after that lapse of time, a stray number of some periodical fell into my hands. I was startled beyond measure on noticing a little story entitled, "The begging wife — a legend of Jerusalem."

Could it be Lily's story? It was, indeed, not quite in the manner of her telling, but unmistakably the same, and no other ending would have seemed probable.

This, then, is the continuation:

"The young woman came to the door of a rich money-changer. Having learned her trouble he considered awhile, looking at the matter in the light of a possible speculation. The dying man might have money, and no doubt was prepared to pay handsomely for what, after all, was not worth a great sum. How much would he give for a day? a month? a year? Alas, the sorrowing wife must abandon her hopes! — her husband was poor — very poor.

"Continuing her way she met a Roman centurion. There was little prospect that he, a heathen, would have a heart for her, the Jewess. But he looked good-natured and she might try.

"Indeed the centurion understood her better than she expected, for if he had not faith, he had superstition enough to make him credulous.

"'My poor child,' he said doubtfully, stroking his grizzly beard, 'I would fain help thee. But you see this life of mine is so uncertain that I know not for a truth whether I have any right to call it mine. I may be dead to-morrow, and by Jove it would be wicked to grant away what I have not got! Indeed I am not sure whether it would not be robbing Cæsar of his due, for my life is sold to him. But I am very sorry for you, nevertheless! Shall I give you some money?"

"But money was not what she wanted; she said so sadly, and the centurion went his way.

"She next accosted a well-to-do tradesman, the owner of a carpenter's shop, employing hundreds of hands. That man was one of the ten lepers whom the Lord had cleansed, and of whom one only turned back to glorify God; but he was not that one. The woman happened to address him with the self-same words with

which they had called upon the Son of God — 'Master, have mercy on us!' but he knew no mercy. Turning to the busy scene in his shop, he answered, 'Woman, look at all this work; I cannot nearly meet demands, and yet you expect me to give you of the little time there is! Nay, you must ask elsewhere.'

"But she importuned him: 'O master! for Rabbi Ben-Miriam's sake, who pitied you, pity me and my husband!'

"The man had not expected to be thus reminded; he grew red, then pale, but found an answer presently:

"'Well, as you seem to know that story, your request is doubly unfair. Don't you see how much shorter my life is than that of other people, since I can only be said to have lived from the day I was healed of that leprosy? It is really too much to expect me to shorten a life already shortened. Get thee gone, woman; time is too precious for further talk.'

"Having left the workshop, the poor wife presently found herself near the temple. Now, filled with grief though she was, she forgot not to cast her mite into the treasury; and going up she met a priest who, having executed his office, was retiring from the house of God.

"'Thou God of Abraham!' he cried, drawing his garments about him as she meekly endeavored to kiss the hem. 'Thou God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, listen to this woman! Am *I* to be the victim of her mad request? It is sorcery!'

"'I am neither mad nor given to sorcery,' she urged humbly.

"'Surely this is sorcery!' reiterated the priest, looking at her disdainfully. 'Beware, lest you be brought into the synagogue to be stoned!'

"She next went to the house of a high-born Syrian of princely parentage, who had come to Jerusalem to enjoy his life. And he had enjoyed it, emptying the cup of pleasure to the very dregs. With his appetites blunted, he knew no longer how to waste his time.

"She was admitted. Through an inner court, a paradise in itself, where statues of whitest marble gleamed between dark-leaved shrubberies, where fountains played and birds united in chorus, where sweet flowrets steeped the air with fragrance; through pillared halls hung with Tyrian purple and enriched with gold and ivory; over floors of Roman mosaic, and through doors opened and shut by slaves in gorgeous attire,— she reached at last to where the lord of all this grandeur was taking his luxurious repose after the exertion of the bath. She found him reclining on a couch with half-closed eyes. An Abyssinian slave, dark as night, was cooling the air about his head with a fan of peacock feathers; while a Greek girl, fair as the day, stroked the soles of his feet with gentle touch. Both these women were beautiful, each after her kind, but that was not what the poor supplicant thought of. Still less did she consider that she herself, holding the mean between Abyssinian and Greek, united in her own person the beauty of both night and day, with her warm complexion and her lustrous eyes — that the charms of these women paled before hers, like stars outshone by the moon.

"'Woman,' said the young man with languid voice, 'it is true, I care little for life; it is a miserable farce at best. But why should I present you with that which hangs heavy on my own hands? I see no reason. Philanthropy? pooh — it is give and take in the world.

Now, what could you give me of pleasure or amusement that I have not tasted to the full? I loathe life; go and leave me to myself!'

"Crying bitterly, the poor wife left the house of the Syrian.

"But hers was a sacred mission; she dared not give up — not yet! There was a certain ruler who lived for his pleasure, and whose liberality invited others to share it. To live, with him, meant to enjoy, and, apart from enjoyment, the world to his understanding was a blank. He had known higher aims. As a youth he had observed all the commandments and had been anxious to inherit life. He was that same young man who came to the Lord saying: 'All these things have I kept — what lack I yet?" But He whom he had called Good Master told him: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me!' And that was not what the young man had expected; for he had great possessions.

"It was a turning point in his life, and from that moment he ceased believing in an inheritance beyond the grave. He joined the Sadducees, who said that there was no resurrection, and became one of their most zealous followers. The poor young woman, therefore, could not well have asked of one more unlikely to give. The rich man replied contemptuously:

"'How foolish and surpassingly arrogant! I have but this one life, and do you expect me to be lavish of it to any chance comer. Know that a day of my existence could not be paid for with all the gold of Ophir! You have mistaken me, my pretty child; you had better apply to the Pharisees.'

"For two full days she continued begging from

house to house, well-nigh exhausting the streets of Jerusalem; but all she obtained was unkindly speeches, if not worse.

"At the close of the second day she yielded to despair, falling on the ground by the gate of Damascus, tired to death and undone with grief. There she lay with a dull sense of misery. But suddenly the well of her tears was dried, a smile like a gleam of sunshine lighting up her grief-worn face. Fatigue was nothing now; she rose quickly and went to where she knew she would find the apostle.

"'Well, my daughter, and how have you sped?' asked he, with loving sympathy.

"'Alas, Father, men are void of pity. The world is evil, and its sinful desires are for self only.'

"'You say truly. Compassion is with God alone.'

"'Yes, Father, and to Him therefore will I go. No one will give me as much as a single day, and many days are needed to restore my husband to my love. I well-nigh despaired. But suddenly I remembered that I had a life — and to judge from my great youth, a long life — before me. O man of God! tell me, may I not give of mine own abundance what hard-hearted men are not willing to make up between them? My husband is half my life to me; let me give him, then, the half of *my* life. Let us live together and die together. Or, if it must be, let him have the whole; I am willing to die, so that he may live.'

"Thus she entreated, the tears flowing down gently over her lovelit face. But the apostle touched her head with a hand of blessing, and said, deeply moved:

"'Daughter, be of good cheer; thou hast found grace in the sight of God. Depart in peace; thy husband is given thee, and ye shall live together!'"

This is the story — Lily's last. Ask me not to describe to you the impression it made on me. I felt as though Lily indeed were speaking to me from another world. My tears fell on the page and I bowed my head, sorrowing not so much for Lily as for myself.

One thing I felt certain of even then. Had the choice been given me, I would gladly have divided my life with her; ay, selfish as I was, I believe I could have given up the whole to save hers. For I did love her! But now what use was the story to me, save that it moved my tears — a few tears which I was ashamed to show.

I endeavor to conclude this letter by the fast-failing light. I tremble — I tremble, at the coming darkness. This fear, I suspect, is chiefly born from a feeling that a night to come — we know not how soon — will usher in the day of judgment. Ah, fearful night, that will bring us to the day when the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven!

Lost! — it is a terrible word, enclosing all the horrors of hell. Am I lost — lost forever? Not yet, the forever is to come, says a voice within. But again, *is* there hope? *is* there a possibility of being saved? I cannot say. Both yes and no seem beyond me. Sometimes I do try and cling to a faint shadow of hope. But it darts through my soul as a flash of lightning; I am utterly unable to hold it fast. At times, again, when I have gone through seasons of deepest suffering, a sudden calm sinks down upon me. Dare I think it healing peace? But no sooner am I aware of it than it is gone, and I even doubt that it was.

Of course there can be no such thing as conversion in hell. But I keep asking — might it not be possible

that all these terrible sufferings, both of retrospect and of present reality, had power to prepare the soul; that perchance at the moment when it is called out to appear at the great judgment, it will flee to the Saviour and clasp His feet for mercy and peace? And if it were so, what if it were thousands of years hence, or tens of thousands, how infinitely precious were this hope! Let me suffer, however long, if so great a salvation were possible in the end.

Lily! ah, I know that she loves me, with a heavenly tenderness akin to the Saviour's for His own. And if the power of love — that wondrous mystery — be more than a mere fable, there is at any rate this one bond left between me and life. For I know my Lily; that bond will never break in all eternity. But a bond which will neither break nor bring about union surely cannot exist in the sight of heaven!

And again, *could* Lily be happy — enjoy salvation without me? That is another question. Can she be content to live when I am lost? And will God deny her what she loved most on earth, what even now in heaven she loves most, next to Him? I cannot believe it. So this leaves me with a hope — a hope centered in Lily. Not because she has power to save me, but because she had been appointed to lead me to the feet of the Saviour. Perhaps — perhaps it will be given her to do so in a future age. She may yet show me the Cross, even as I — all unworthy — showed it to her when she died. Did she not say with her last breath that we should meet again? And with this sure hope she fell asleep in peace! Is it possible that God would have let her leave me with a peace founded on an untruth, a miserable delusion, even at the solemn moment of entering His presence?

Surely it is impossible. So the conclusion seems to lie very near, but I dare not — I dare not draw it!

Again, also — the whole of hell is burdened with a feeling, veiled and but dimly understood, that there is a possibility of redemption before the final word is spoken, when all is at an end. Hope raises her front, however feebly — yea, a great hope. And surely God, being what He is, could never let millions of miserable souls feed on that streak of light if it were mere delusion — surely, surely not! He is the God of justice, and we receive the due reward of our deeds; but, again, He is the God of mercy and unspeakable tenderness, who can never delight in our misery. And He is the God of truth; He cannot let us feed on a lie! And yet, is it not possible also that delusion is part of the punishment, being, like everything else, the outcome of a sin-deluded life? Ah, woe is me, where is that hope which but a moment since illumined my soul as with a reflection of eternity? it is gone — gone, like a false dawn swallowed up in night! . . . .

I give up. My heart would break, but nothing ever breaks here. Hearts here are strong to bear any amount of misery.

No, we are not so fortunate as to break our hearts. I was thinking of something else. . . . There may be a hope left — nothing certainly could be much worse. . . . Things are desperately fast here, and not made for rupture. All is cause and effect, past act and consequence. Indeed, since the word "hell" seems to have become objectionable with well-bred people, let me suggest their calling this place *The World of Consequences!*

Have you any idea that I am writing in an agony of despair? You would shrink back from me in hor-

ror could you see me, though perchance you still call me friend. May heaven preserve you from ever seeing me!

But I forget, I was trying to finish this letter. It may be long, very long, before you hear of me again, if ever! I still will call you friend, yet it will be natural that if all break, friendship too must vanish.

Farewell, then, my friend. Please God, we shall never meet!

. . . . . .

I wrote the above as the awful night was spreading her wings,— oh how I dreaded its settling! Every renewed darkness brings new agony, new despair. And as soon as the light has vanished entirely, hell is swept of everything with which imagination had endowed it: towns, castles, houses, parks, churches, clubs, and all places of amusement — everything has vanished, leaving a desert void, and souls unclothed of aught but bare being. Hell is then like a vast dungeon where man and woman, rich and poor, crawl about in utter loneliness. While the light lasted, dusky though at best it is, one could arrange oneself according to one's fancy, having everything one listed, unreal though it were — mere shadows of thought: still it is a kind of occupation to surround oneself with imagined possessions; but this terrible night admits of no such jugglery. It leaves me naked, poor, forsaken, homeless, friendless — a prey to bitter reality. I shrink together within my miserable self, not knowing where I am, or who may be near me. Nor do I care to know, filled with the one thought that I am in the place of lost souls — lost myself.

Evil thoughts keep settling round my heart, beleaguering it as the ruthless Romans did the unhappy

city of David. This siege, too, ends with a terrible destruction, an agony of suffering, the like of which the world has never seen.

As before, I passed the long night shuddering, trembling for outward cold, but with a horrible fire within. You say in the world, and say truly, that there are conflicts in which even strong men fail. Alas, the hardest conflict now seems a happy condition, for here struggling is at an end, as being too good for hell! There is only raving and madness here,— a kind of spiritual suicide even,— but no struggling for victory. The soul here is a victim, forsaken by the powers of good. Every little devil is permitted to fasten his miserable claws on the helpless mind. Understand me, it is a figure of speech. There are no devils in this place save our own evil desires, passions, and sinful thoughts. Satan at times is here, but, thanks be to God, not yet has he final power over the soul.

In this very night he was present — come to look on the miserable beings he delights in considering his. Though not always, yet generally, he chooses darkness for his visits. As a sudden whirlwind, felt but not seen, he is among us, and hell is frozen with horror. All the millions of souls then shrink together in an agony of unutterable fear, knowing that one is among them who never knew pity and truth — the great destroyer, ready to destroy them. And this is the dreadful thing, that, though certain of his presence — ay, feeling it — not one of us can say, see here! see there! You hear a crackling as of fire — serpents of flame keep darting across the tenebrous space, showing his path; but where is *he,* the dread enemy? His consuming eye at this very moment may be upon you, gloating over your trembling soul.

I will be silent — I cannot dwell on these horrors. Be it enough to say that again and again I felt myself in the very grasp of the evil one, who seemed to dally with my anguish. It took all manner of forms — suffice it to give one: I suddenly felt as though I were a bottomless ocean, in which my sins were swimming about like fish. And the devil sat on the shore, grinning and throwing his lines, using now this evil desire, now that, as a bait. He was an expert, catching fish upon fish. Suddenly the float disappeared, dragged down into the deep — a good catch no doubt. He brought it up triumphantly — O Lord of pity, my own heart, bleeding and writhing! It was horrible, horrible! Let me drop the veil.

This too is imagination of course, or, at worst, Satan's own evil pastime with the hopeless mind. But, nevertheless, what is there more real than death? and I suffered a hundred deaths in that night.

At last, at last — I know not after what length of time — hell was given up again to its own state of misery — rising to it with a gasp as out of a fearful dream.

Then I felt it a relief almost to be but a prey once more to my own evil thoughts. Bad as it was, to be left to myself seemed gain. As before, the whole of my past life was unrolled to my sight, sin upon sin, failure upon failure, gnawing at my heart till it was but a single festering wound.

But with all this suffering, a longing was blended more deep, more burning, than any I had felt before. Not for the life behind me,— the world with its pleasures was dead,— but for a living soul I thirsted — a soul to understand me. Lily, my father, Aunt Betty — from them I was separated to eternity, a great gulf

being fixed between them and me; but my mother — my own mother — there was only death between me and her, and a wondrous truth lies hidden in that word — love is stronger than death. That was the closest bond after all — that between my mother and me — the bond of Nature! What in all the universe could be better than a mother's love! With a thirsty longing my thoughts turned to her — O mother, where art thou?

And here again a great pain side by side with yearning. How badly I had rewarded her love in life! Had I not been her one and all? but she, in truth, was very little to me. How wrongly I had judged her, often thinking meanly of her motives, deeming her cold and worldly — a selfish nature to which the appreciation of society was more than the heart's goodness — to which Christianity even was a mere matter of propriety; in which faith and charity were not strong enough to teach her that self and the world should be sacrificed, but which hesitated not to sacrifice even the holiest on the world's altars to the advantage of self!

How wickedly I had thought of her, ungrateful wretch that I was! I grieved for it now; surely she had been the best of mothers — the most perfect of women, loving and good!

These painful thoughts unnerved me — I felt weak and softened. "O mother, dear, mother!" my heart kept crying with the wail of a child. I care not if you laugh at me, but I had come to this — I longed for her with the simple longing of the hungry babe for the mother's breast.

For the first time the desire was strong in me to return to the upper world — an indescribable power

drawing me irresistibly. The ghost nature was fluttering within me, lifting its wings, urging me to go; but my yearning found vent in the cry only, "Mother, mother!"

— — — — — —

A faint streak of dawn. My eye fell on a cowering figure, ill-shaped and moaning, sunk in a heap not far from me. An impossible, frightful thought stole through me at the sight. My soul heaved like a storm-lashed sea.

The figure moved and turned. . . . God in heaven, that terrible face, ghastly and distorted, it was . . . it was . . . my mother's!

I dashed away in headlong flight — I could, I would not believe it. . . .

But alas, my friend, what matters my believing it or not — it *was* my mother!

Poor, poor mother! This is the crushing blow, if such there be here. I thought I had known the worst — but this is awful, awful!

What more shall I say? Words are powerless — the despair of hell you cannot conceive. It were poor consolation that, being equally miserable now, we might weep together, uphold one another, comforting each other in pain. But even that is denied! Tears we have not — sympathy there is not; at least, I have not found it — and naturally, since love is utterly unknown here. We can only cower side by side, through ages to come,— each taken up with self. Fellowship? Nay, but it is worse than desert loneliness. We have not a word to say to one another; we dread to look at each other. Everything between us is cold, dead — dead. We have our own agony of fire, each within

the soul; but that fire which goes forth to warm another is as a burnt-out crater filled with the ashes of despair. . . .

I can no more . . . fare thee well!

HEAVEN

THE HOME OF

THE REDEEMED

By REV. WM. H. LINDEMUTH

"If a man die shall he live again."

The home in Heaven.

What we know about Heaven.

Heaven a place, a definite locality.

Heaven a place of exquisite beauty.

Heaven will meet real human wants.

Heaven will be a place of rest.

Heaven a place of occupation for the mind.

Heaven a place of purity for the soul.

Heaven a place of unalloyed happiness.

HEAVEN.

MAN is destined for the glory of another world where his soul, untrammelled, will make perpetual progress to its perfection. So man may cry: "This is not my whole life. This body is not my whole heritage. I go to that bright land where the immortal part shines up and on forever and ever."

To live again is the hunger of the soul. As the babe instinctively takes nourishment at the mother's bosom, so men, without instruction, have reached out for a future life. Go along the years and put your question, "If a man die shall he live again?" There is but one response. Man's soul is in exile. Like the homing pigeon, when he is released, man flies back to God. The race is home-sick. Man is not forever satisfied with humanity; divinity is planted within him. The soul intuitively reaches for life, and the God who gave him this reach will see to it that it comes to his grasp. Now we are certain of several things. First, The instincts and aspiration of nature crave for immortality. Second, The mind of man, through the help of natural religion, has been able to hold a sense of immortality which has comforted him with the probability of a future life. Third, The life after death is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity. "Without such a belief," says Max Muller, "religion is like an arch resting on one pillar, like a bridge ending in an abyss."

Peering anxiously through the mists of time, the sad heart sometimes pleadingly asks, "But where is

heaven?" Surely, it is a place, somewhere, for Christ said "I go to prepare a place for you." It cannot be far away, for under the bidding of the Master Lazarus could instantly "come forth" from its mysterious chambers, and the repentant thief was promised, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

THE HOME IN HEAVEN.

WHEN Sir Walter Scott came back from Italy, broken in mind and body, to die in his beautiful Abbotsford, the pride and ambition of his life, as he approached the old familiar scenes of other years, he aroused from his stupor, and cried, "There's Gala Water!" "Yonder are the Eildon Hills!" And when Abbotsford came into view, he had his attendants lift him in the carriage that he might look in rapture upon the lovely building and its beautiful surroundings. He was soon to leave forever those walls and towers, his gardens and dogs, his books and pictures, and all the old landmarks that he loved. He had come home to die. But his great consolation was that he was again at home. It is the word "Home" which casts its magic spell over us in this world, and what shall be our feelings when we think of "the Home over there." Jesus has said, "In my Father's House are many mansions." If the language of His time had possessed a word for "home" Christ would have used it in this connection, for He certainly referred to the Heavenly Home.

How is it with us from day to day? Are we thinking with joy and sweet expectation of the beautiful Home that will some day be ours? Do we realize that we are going Home? Do we ever get home-

sick, as Paul did, for the "Better Land"? "Blessed are the homesick," said Heine, "for they shall get home." So our eyes may light up at the thought, our hearts may sing for joy, as we look away from this transitory abode to our eternal abiding place. We should be able to say from our souls, as Bonar said,

"When I shall wake on that fair morn of morns
After whose dawning never night returns,
And with whose glory day eternal burns,
I shall be satisfied."

All our hopes should centre there — in Heaven. All our ambitions should look thither — to Heaven. All our loves should reach to that shore — to Heaven. All our longings should end there — in Heaven. If we follow the guidance of the one Book which tells us of the Heavenly Home and the way thither, we will not be disappointed at last.

In any effort to describe Heaven we are embarrassed by the poverty of language to fully express the beauties and glories of the Place and its pursuits. Even Paul, when he was lifted up to a superlative view of the world beyond, could not tell what he had seen and heard. He was not forbidden to report what he had experienced in that vision; he was simply unable to do it. There was no analogue in human speech which would enable him to convey his thought. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." When little Prince Roland, sitting upon the knees of King Charlemagne, besought the great Ruler to tell him what treasures were to be his when he should be king, the wise king shook

his head and grew thoughtful. How could a little child receive from a great ruler the full story of castles and palaces, and kingly realms that were to be his when childhood had passed away? The very silence of Charlemagne foretold a wealth that was beyond description. Even so is it when we approach the Bible with the question of Heaven and our possessions there. The complete revelation would be far beyond our childish understanding. Jesus said, "If it were not so I would have told you." That is enough. The very silence of the Bible about Heaven is the best proof of the unspeakable glory and the joy that shall be ours when we get "Home."

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HEAVEN.

THOUGH an impenetrable veil hangs before the Holiest of All, and many questions must remain unsolved here, a window has been opened in the positive declarations and rational promises of God's Word, and we catch glimmering views of the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly city, whose gates will open to all who seek admission through Christ the Saviour. "After this I looked, and, behold a door was opened in Heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." This was the vision which cheered John, the Dreamer on Patmos. He had once been of that company of the Disciples whom the Master had encouraged by His words of hope, "Let not your hearts be troubled; In My Father's House are many mansions." This revelation was a source of unspeakable comfort to the Disciples, and, together with the "sure words of

prophecy," has cheered many a lonely pilgrim since.

Let us think of Heaven awhile. What do we know about it? Where is it? What is its character? What are its associations and employments? Who are its inhabitants? Shall we meet there those whom "we have loved long since and lost awhile? May we all go to Heaven? What are the facts revealed to us concerning the Heavenly Home?

HEAVEN IS A PLACE, A DEFINITE LOCALITY.

Is Heaven a Place, or is it simply a state of existence? Is it local, material, tangible? The language that Jesus used in speaking of Heaven forbids the idea that it is merely a state of mind, a moral condition. He frequently referred to the Place where God is, and where God's children are to be. He said concerning Himself, "I came down from Heaven." He prophesied that He would again return to His Heavenly seat. This alone would preclude the speculation concerning the abstract character of the future world. The common imagination that Paradise is a lofty aerial region where the inhabitants float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended on nothing, where every vestige of materialism is done away, is not in accord with reason or Scripture. The idea of a Place of happiness for the departed is coextensive with the idea of immortality. The rude savage and the cultured heathen have shared the opinion that the dead have gone to the Place where God has revealed His greatest glory. They have expressed in this fancy their thought of the Elysian Fields, Hesperian Gardens, and Islands of the Blest. Jesus not only said, "I go to prepare a place for you,"

but He gave utterance to this thought in His remarkable prayer for His Disciples, " Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me." If Heaven is not a material and local habitation, then all such language is meaningless.

All the analogies of soul and body here declare the necessity of similar relations in the future life. The faculties of the soul are dependent upon a material body for their manifest activity in this life, and it cannot be otherwise in the life to come unless God will destroy our five senses and establish new modes of operation for sense reason, and memory. All matter does not necessarily have the same form. In this world there are different manifestations of material substance. We see matter in its crudest form in the stone and clod. On the other hand, we behold it in the finer forms of the air and the sunbeam. They are all material substances, but differing in fineness of quality. The body that shall be may still be material and yet infinitely finer than this one. As the glory of the sunbeam far exceeds the glory of the stone, so shall the resurrection body appear with excellences superior to this mortal body.

For such a body, refined and immortalized, inhabited by the redeemed soul, God has evidently provided a place of existence.

Apart from all rational considerations, our argument may rest upon the terms of Scripture, which is our final appeal in all matters relating to the life beyond this life. In the Bible Heaven is spoken of as, " My Father's House," as " Paradise," a " City," the " Holy Place," the " New Jerusalem." Do we not feel that such references are more than figurative of a state

of existence? Not more real to Moses was Palestine, when from the top of Pisgah he looked upon its fertile fields and valleys and green mountain slopes, than is the Heaven which awaits us in the hereafter. By intuition the child points upward toward Heaven, and he believes that there is a Place where God and His angels are, where his loved ones dwell. We know not where it is, but we feel that it is a definite Place. There are some among the fathers who believed it was located in Alcyone of the Pleiades, which was regarded as the central star of the universal system. We must admit that there is a fascination in the delightful theory that Heaven is the centre of the universe. The Scriptures point to a place in some high and far off region of space. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens." "A glorious high throne from the beginning is Thy sanctuary." We do not know that such Scripture is the proof of the astronomical theory that there is a great central sun, as great and large in proportion as all the systems it controls, and that Heaven is located there. But we must admit its fascination for our faith. It is useless to further speculate upon its location. That is one of the secrets of Jehovah. It is enough to know that it is our Father's House, our Home-land, and if we are the true children of God we shall some day enter into the inheritance of the saints in light.

"There on the throne the Lamb once slain is seated,
The Shepherd's joy upon His Holy Face;
While countless hosts, their warfare all completed,
In circling bands lift ceaseless songs of praise.

O sorrowing souls, beneath earth's burdens bending,
Lift up your eyes to yonder City fair;
And through your tears let praise be still ascending
For rest and home and loved ones waiting there."

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF EXQUISITE BEAUTY.

THAT was impressed upon John in his Patmos vision. It is significant that the last two chapters of his Revelation relate strictly to a description of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In the previous chapters he has traced in mystic figures the Church up to the general resurrection and the last judgment, and, as a climax, his vision opens to view the glories of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the blessed condition of the saints. "And the City had twelve gates; every gate was one of pearl; and the street of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Its foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones; jasper and sapphire; chalcedony and emerald; sardonyx, sardius and chrysolite; beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst." It is needless to say that these figures of the Apocalypse are not to be interpreted literally, but they represent the highest efforts of poetical description to convey to human minds that Place of surpassing splendors. Whatever there is in gold and precious gems to express supreme loveliness and infinite beauty is to be taken as but a feeble description of the glory and magnificence of the Heavenly City.

An American artist once sat in his studio with a Bible open before him, engaged in arranging squares of colored glass. His guide book was the 21st chapter of Revelation. "I have made a singular dis-

covery," he said. "These are the precious stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem, and when placed in the order described in the Vision they form a perfect harmony of color. Were a convention of artists called to produce a perfect color scheme, they could not improve upon this one." Heaven is all beauty because it is all harmony. It is all glorious.

"That clime is not like this dull clime of ours;
All, all is brightness there;
A sweeter influence breathes around its flowers,
And a benignant air.
No calm below is like that calm above,
No region here is like that realm of love;
Earth's softest Spring ne'er shed so soft a light,
Earth's brightest Summer never shone so bright.

That sky is not like this sad sky of ours,
Tinged with earth's change and care;
No shadow dims it, and no rain-cloud lowers;
No broken sunshine there:
One everlasting stretch of azure pours
Its stainless splendor o'er those sinless shores;
For there Jehovah shines with heavenly ray,
And Jesus reigns, dispensing endless day."

In their holy estate Adam and Eve lived amid the material beauty of lovely Paradise, and it would seem that the gifts of Nature in that Garden of Delights were bestowed to enhance their happiness and elevate their holy minds. The myriad forms of beauty would suggest a thousand thoughts of their Creator. They looked through Nature up to Nature's God. What happiness was theirs whose home was in the midst of

cool retreats and spicy groves, embowered walks, mossy seats, crystal streams and fragrant flowers and luscious fruits! We know not what were all the environments of Eden, but no one doubts that it was a place of exquisite loveliness, and the similitude of the Paradise above. If earth is still so beautiful under a curse, how surpassingly glorious it must have been when "the animations of life met no barriers, and were subject to no obscuration, and knew no decay."

In some portions of Scripture the scenery of Heaven is represented as similar to that of earth. That there will be trees and streams and mountains and birds and flowers is in the range of possibility. At least we know that these objects of Nature are so beautiful and delightful here that they would contribute much to the beauty of another world. We feel that Heaven is a natural and not an artificial adjustment, and the more we think about it in a natural way the more does it satisfy our longings.

It may be but the poet's fancy, and yet we delight to hang our thoughts on such words as these: —

"All the walls of that dear City
Are of bright and burnished gold;
It is matchless in its beauty;
And its treasures are untold.

From the throne a river issues,
Clear as crystal, passing bright
And it traverses the City
Like a sudden beam of light.

Where it waters leafy Eden,
Rolling over silver sands,

Sit the angels softly chiming
On the harps between their hands.

There the meadows, green and dewy,
Shine with lilies wondrous fair,
Thousand, thousand are the colors
Of the waving flowers there.

There the forests ever blossom
Like our orchards here in May,
There the gardens never wither
But eternally are gay.

There are roses and carnations,
There the honeysuckles twine,
There along the river edges
Golden jonquils ever shine

There the water-lilies open
Lying on the sea of glass,
There the Yellow Crocus glimmers
Like a flame amidst the grass.

There the wind is sweetly fragrant
And is laden with the song
Of the seraphs and the elders
And the great redeemed throng."

The Heavenly Home is a place of beauty. We believe that, and, whatever may be the constitution of things that combine to make up its loveliness, it is Jerusalem the Golden.

HEAVEN WILL MEET REAL HUMAN WANTS.

The provisions of heaven will meet real human wants and will correspond to the qualities and capacities of human nature.

FOR some the subject, "Heaven," has been spoiled because of the way it has been handled. Our ideas of it must be entirely natural. There we shall continue to be ourselves. We shall have body, mind, and soul, but our capacities will be greatly enlarged, and under the conditions of a glorified existence, greater opportunities will spread before them.

It is perfectly natural that our ideas of that Heavenly Home should be colored by our longings here. We hope for all that we know to be good now, and for the opposite of that which has limited our development in the mortal body, and given us the sharpest pangs on earth.

When Robert Hall was asked for his opinion of what Heaven is, he replied, "Heaven is a place of rest." He said that because he had suffered much physical pain, and this made him long for a condition where bodily suffering was unknown. That was natural. We all want forever a condition of being which will perfectly satisfy the body, mind, and soul.

"What is Heaven?" I asked a little child.
"All joy!" and in her innocence she smiled.

I asked the aged, with her care oppressed.
"All suffering o'er, O Heaven at last is rest."

I asked a maiden, meek and tender eyed.
" It must be love! " she modestly replied.

I asked the artist who adored his art.
" Heaven is all beauty! " spoke his raptured heart.

I asked the poet with his soul afire.
" ' Tis glory! glory! " and he struck his lyre.

I asked the Christian waiting his release.
A halo round him. Low he murmured, " Peace."

So all may look with hopeful eyes above,
'Tis beauty, glory, joy, rest, peace, and love."

HEAVEN WILL BE A PLACE OF REST.

THE physical side of the next life is emphasized and illumined by the resurrection. There we shall have a body with environment to suit. How God will preserve the identity of this body we cannot tell. We need not even care to know. The dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Here our body is called a vile body, or, more literally, a body of humiliation, of blemishes. But there it will be a beautiful, healthy, immortal body, free from all weaknesses, all vices, all corruption. Here we have bodily cravings, we are hungry and thirsty, but there " they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters." Here we grow weary of life's burdens; we toil on, sick at heart, seeking rest and finding none, but yonder is a land of rest.

"No more fatigue, no more distress,
Nor sin, nor hell, shall reach that place,
No sighs shall mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues."

HEAVEN WILL BE A PLACE OF OCCUPATION FOR THE MIND.

THE pleasures of intellect are among the highest of which we are capable in this world. Yet how little comparatively we know in this life! The acquisitions of a Newton seemed to him, in view of the great ocean of knowledge spreading before him, like the boys gathering pebbles on the beach. After all intellectual research the mind of man is still in ignorance with reference to the most important and profound subjects of knowledge. Then again, the smallest number of human beings are gifted with great intellectual reach and grasp. The world is full of dwarfed intellects, limited by bodily ills, constitutional environments, and lack of chance for the fullest development. When is the mind of man to have its fullest development? We answer, In Heaven.

In Heaven there will doubtless be unlimited mental activity. That thought alone thrills our hopes and sets our minds to throbbing. Our intellectual faculties will be glorified, and, if in this life they often give us inexpressible pleasure, how ineffable will be our satisfaction in dealing with eternal truths! "Now we know in part. Sin has enfeebled our mental powers in their grasp of great thoughts, but they will be released from this bondage and perfected for illimitable pursuits of knowledge in the Home above. Who can tell the heavenly capabilities of reason, judgment, memory,

and imagination? Now we study as by candle-light, but when the morning breaks, and the beauties of a new world are spread out before our waking vision, we shall behold all things as in a blaze of day. That will be "a world of solved problems and realized ideals." Think of the acquisitions of knowledge concerning God, His attributes and works, concerning faith, love, and obedience, think of the grasping of new ideas, of the unrolling of the history of the past, of knowledge of Time and Space, of the wonders of the stars and the regions beyond! Through eternity the mind will roam over these exhaustless fields and find new wonders every hour. There Newton and Keplar will take increasing delight in heavenly explorations; there Luther and Wesley, Whitefield and Spurgeon, will be more enraptured by the essential truths of Christianity,— God, Christ, and immortality. There the painter and the sculptor, the poet and the scientist, will find new forms to attract investigation in relation to the laws of the universe. There they who have lived in a limited world of intellectual pursuits here will feel the joys of an expanding mind, and new thoughts, new ideals, new opportunities will make the life of Heaven an unceasing joy in the acquisition of knowledge. Think, O soul, with what increased strength thou shalt enter that school where God Himself is the Teacher and thou art the pupil! Truly, for the intellect there shall be "no night there." No night of error, no night of ignorance, no night of limited faculties, no incapacity from the bodily senses. The ways of Providence shall be made clear; the mysteries of Grace shall be unfolded; the things hard to understand shall all be made known. That will be the thinker's unlimited realm. We shall think God's thoughts after

Him. We shall have the Book of Knowledge with eternal leaves and unbounded capacity to read them.

HEAVEN WILL BE A PLACE OF PURITY FOR THE SOUL.

It is a holy Place. Its beauty is distinctly the "beauty of holiness." On its throne sits the ineffable God, before whom angels and archangels veil their faces, filling the arches of the City with their adoring song: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!"

When John looked through the open window into Heaven he caught glimpses of a white-robed multitude. "Who are these arrayed in white robes?" was his instant query. "These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They had come up through sin and tribulation, and now they were supremely happy in a place where purity reigned. The struggle with corrupt human nature was over. There was no temptation, no evil heart of unbelief, no sinful desires, no night of impurity. They beheld the King in the beauty of His holiness.

That is Heaven,— a place of purity. Its badge of honor is purity. Its joy is the joy of purity. Its dignity is the honor of purity. All its perfections are the perfections of purity. What must it be to live forever under such refulgence of purity and holiness! All unholiness shut out, conscience free from dead works, every faculty and every sense in tune with the glory and beauty of the new world. It is a pure world for the pure.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF UNALLOYED HAPPINESS.

THIS is a summary expression of all that we have said about Heaven. The human soul craves for happiness, but in this world there is a strange mixture of joy and sorrow, of tears and laughter, of rest and weariness, of health and sickness, of light and darkness. It is the common experience that no one can be perfectly happy in this world. But, thank God, there is a Place where joy, rest, and peace shall be experienced in perfection. "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." "And there shall be no night there." There shall be no more sin, and consequently no more misery; no more affliction of bodies, no desolate homes, no breaking hearts, no gathering shadows of sorrow and bereavement. "And there shall be no more sea"—no restless tossing of the soul. "And there shall be no more tears." God Himself shall wipe them all from our eyes.

O what a happy Place Heaven will be! Not half has yet been told. And all will be eternal. The glimpses of Divine glory will not be momentary, as upon the Mount of Transfiguration, but there we shall abide in the beatific vision. And hereafter, in the lurid morning that will break on that distant shore, we shall take our place in the beauty and might of a glorified manhood, gifted with infinite capacities, privileges, and opportunities, and we shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

As Christian, in the Pilgrim's Progress, drew near

to the Heavenly City, he saw the gates opened to receive others. "I looked in after them," he says, "and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many who had crowns on their heads and palms in their hands and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also some that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy is the Lord'! And after that they shut up the gates; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them." Do you, dear Reader, wish to mingle with that shining throng? Then take the hand of the Lord of Salvation, and let Him lead you on through the duties, and responsibilities, and cares of life, and you will find that your way will lead up the steeps and over the rough places into the City of God.

"This land is Home; no stranger art thou here;
Sweet and familiar words
From voices silent long salute thine ear;
And winds and songs of birds,
And bees and blossoms and sweet perfumes are near.

O happy soul, be thankful now and rest;
Heaven is a goodly land;
And God is love, and those He loves are blest; —
Now thou dost understand;
The least thou hast is better than the best.

That thou didst hope for; now upon thine eyes
The new life opens fair;
Before thy feet the blessed journey lies
Through homelands everywhere;
And Heaven to thee is all a sweet surprise."

AS IT IS HEAVEN

By One Of The Redeemed.

AN ACCOUNT OF A SOUL'S ARRIVAL IN THE BETTER LAND AND OF HER AWAKING

"IN THE BEAUTIFUL MORNING"

By the most enchanting music, first in distant soft sweet notes, then coming nearer and bursting forth in rapturous song; of her first view of

THE HEAVENLY LANDSCAPE

with its green sward, of the beauty of softest velvet, its flowing river, floating lilies, perfumed air, majestic trees with magnificient foliage, and beautiful birds of marvelous song and brilliant plumage; of meeting and recognizing her husband, who with face familiar on earth years before, but more radiantly beautiful, and lighted up with glory, and with an intelligence more than earth-born sparkling in his eyes, says,

"Welcome Home, My Darling One, Good Morning!"

Of flying through space, on spirit wings, with the swiftness of light, to view God's great universe, and meeting convoys of angels, on errands of love; of angelic companionship and ministries; of the soul's entry through pearly gates into the shining city, and arrival at

Her Own Mansion

prepared with all the treasures of art, music and literature, and every grace and charm of beauty known, desired or imagined in an earthly home, a thousand-fold more beautiful; of meeting her sister Elsie, who appears as the little child known on earth, and suddenly changes to the tall and beautiful maiden she is after ten years of **GROWTH** and **CULTURE** in **HEAVEN**; of little children playing, and infant choirs singing; of angelic spirits leading redeemed souls

Into The Presence Of Jesus,

amid scenes of indescribable glory, where each, in an ecstacy of joy unspeakable, receives a word of glad welcome, and expression of love from heaven's great King, and each soul feels at home with its redeemer; of delightful occupation without weariness; of the pursuit of knowledge, with quickened perception, the five senses ten-fold more accute and the number increased, mental powers enlarged, and memory faultless, and perfect power to convey thought and feeling to others; of, save meeting Jesus, the soul's crowning ectacy of heaven

The Coming of Edith

her only child, the impression of father and mother that she is coming, an intimation from her ministering spirit that the time is near, hastening to the city and entering their mansion to see her standing white robed and garlanded amid flowers strewn by angels, and hear her cry "Father! Mother!" as she glides into their arms and they stand a reunited family.

Many books, philosophical, fanciful, religious, scientific, have been written on this theme; but none that has the peculiar charm of this. It is largely a record of experience. Every incident recorded in it of the earth life is ABSOLUTELY TRUE.

THE AUTHOR

is the wife of a christian minister, and the book was written after a most wonderful experience, when during a desperate illness the veil between earth and heaven was frayed thin, and for a limited time she looked into the hidden realms, and saw those things which John could find no language to describe. It is deeply religious, and though it contains ideas not mentioned in the Bible, it holds nothing contrary to its teaching.

WHAT IT TELLS OF

That heaven is a place, not merely a state of being. That it possesses mountains, lakes, verdure, flowers, and all things to delight the senses. That these senses, instead of being five in number as on earth are many more; How one travels and learns; How the memory is perfected so that nothing once seen or heard is ever lost; How the scientist and artist continue their labor and researches there with an infinitely wider opportunity; How Christ mingles with his people, and the wondrous scenes of the "Shining City"—these are some of the things told of in this volume.

CHILDREN IN HEAVEN

The vast majority of the human race die in infancy. It follows that the far greater number of the inhabitants of heaven enter there as little children. "As it is in heaven" tells of them, how they play as they played on earth, and grow up to maturity, yet can still appear to the parent's eyes the children they were when they were called across the dark river.

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